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To Members of the IFW Committee:

I am writing to express my support for LD 1012 An Act To Fund Wildlife Rehabilitators by re-allocating 5% from both the Fisheries and Wildlife habitat conservation as well as the endangered and threatened species sections of the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund, a group formed in 1994 by the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine and Maine Audubon.

It seems that this bill is a fair re-distribution of the Fund's resources because many of the grant requests fall under the purview of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, as well as the Maine Natural Areas Program which is an adjunct of ACF.

These state agencies enjoy the benefit of financial support of taxpayers, and the Commissioners of both ACF and IFW (plus the Director of the Natural Areas Program) sit on the Fund's Board. In short, they have resources and relationships that many of the state's wildlife rehabilitators don't, and, as we all know, they are unpaid volunteers to boot.

Yet they persevere and have continued to do so, performing a real labor of love to help animals who have been wounded or hurt very often by human interaction, restoring their health and whenever possible, releasing them back to their natural habitat. Rehabilitators are high on compassion and healing, low on the financial support needed to continue their life-saving mission. 10% of the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund budget does not seem too much to ask.

I urge the committee to approve LD 1012.