

Dear Chair LaFountain, Chair Landry, and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee,

This testimony is in support of LD 2141, a bill that will fund critical work to reduce the spread of aquatic invasive species.

As a conservation worker in the field of aquatic invasives, I have seen in a professional capacity how disruptive invasive species are to both the ecological and the socio-economic value of Maine's freshwater resources. Water bodies currently infested with invasive species are a risk to as-yet uninfested waters, and currently uninfested waters are at increasingly high risk from increased boat traffic. As a resident of the Rangeley lakes region, and an invasive plant patrol volunteer, I see in a personal capacity how critical our lake health is to Maine's residents, and the interest they hold in keeping our waters free of invasive species.

The threat of invasive aquatic species is only going to increase as more waterbodies both in and outside of Maine become infested and become sources for increased spread. Maine's very deserved reputation for quality freshwater resources can only be retained with proportionally increased vigilance and effort. LD 2141 provides much needed funding for this effort, and is an investment in Maine's future. Past investments have shown themselves effective as Maine's foresight has, to date, resulted in fewer infestations than in neighboring states. Improving existing programs and expanding prevention and mitigation efforts is a good and necessary step that honors the value Mainers place on our freshwater: for drinking, for recreation, for tourism, and for the intrinsic value that our lakes and rivers contribute to the ecology and character of our state.

I urge you to support LD 2141 and invest in the future of Maine and our lakes.

Sincerely,

Em Russell

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Plant Survey and Control Teams, Friends of the Cobbossee Watershed

Lake Stewards of Maine, IPP volunteer and Rangeley Lake team lead