

Ted Tucci
Androscoggin Lake Improvement Corporation
LD 1763

Good afternoon Members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 1763, "An Act to Regulate Non-water-dependent Floating Structures on Maine's Waters".

My name is Ted Tucci. I am a seasonal resident of Wayne. I submit this testimony as president of Androscoggin Lake Improvement Corporation (ALIC), an all-volunteer non-profit lake association with approximately 150 members. ALIC's mission is to preserve and protect Androscoggin Lake's water quality, wildlife and natural beauty.

Androscoggin Lake is a 4,000 acre great pond situated in Wayne and Leeds. A Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Report ("Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance") describes the western shore and islands of Androscoggin Lake as "support[ing] a diverse assemblage of rare species and exemplary natural communities", including six types of rare plants, two significant wildlife habitats, and three rare and exemplary natural communities. Our lake is just one of the hundreds across Maine that need the protection of natural resources that LD 1763 will provide.

You will be hearing from environmental and lake health experts on the dangers that proliferation of non-water-dependent floating structures (floating structures) pose to the natural habitat of Maine's lakes. My testimony focuses on reasons why allowing floating structures to occupy Maine's lakes is bad economic policy and contrary to Maine's policy of access to waterway as an essential public right.

Maine's lakes are different than those in many other parts of the country. Because of the dedicated efforts of hundreds of Mainers across generations, zoning regulation has largely preserved the natural contours and unspoiled qualities of our lake shorelines. This unique characteristic of Maine's lakes is a critical component of their economic value. A 2024 University of Maine study concluded that the "total net economic value of Maine's lakes is over \$14 billion, with the largest contribution coming from lakefront properties."

Making Maine's lakes less "natural" by allowing man-made floating structures to be anchored on or near shorelines will reduce the economic value of Maine's lakes. Floating structures do not generate property tax or license revenue. There is a reason most shoreland regulations prohibit construction of new structures on land in close proximity to lakes. Destruction of the natural shoreline vegetation and increased runoff pollution reduced water quality and diminishes the economic value of our lakes.

Allowing floating structures to multiply in Maine is also bad public policy. Maine recognizes the public trust doctrine, which imposes a duty on the state to protect the public's common heritage in navigable waterways. Simply stated, there is no public policy justification to allow an individual to claim an occupancy right to a portion of Maine's waterways by simply building a raft with a dwelling on top and anchoring it in public waters.

Your constituents expect you to protect the economic value of Maine's greatest natural resources -- its lakes and great ponds. Your constituents expect you to uphold their right to equitable access to public waterways. On behalf of ALIC, I urge you to uphold that trust by supporting LD 1763.

Respectfully submitted,

Ted Tucci
Androscoggin Lake Improvement Corporation