



**APPALACHIAN
MOUNTAIN CLUB**
SINCE 1876

Testimony of Eliza Townsend

In opposition to LD 829

An Act to Standardize the Laws Regarding the Carrying of Concealed Handguns in State Parks

March 26, 2025

Good morning, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, I am Eliza Townsend, Maine Conservation Policy Director for the Appalachian Mountain Club.

AMC is a people-oriented conservation nonprofit; our mission is the protection, understanding, and enjoyment of the outdoors. We have 6,200 members in Maine and manage 130,000 acres of forestland in Piscataquis County for multiple use, including sustainable forestry, backcountry recreation, and outdoor education. We pay property taxes on all of our land.

We oppose LD 829, which proposes to repeal the requirement that those carrying a concealed handgun in Acadia National Park and Maine's state parks have a permit to do so. The permitting process ensures that a permit holder is of good moral character and has a demonstrated knowledge of handgun safety. Both are essential in places visited by about 7 million people each year for rest and refreshment. We can think of no compelling need that argues for a change in current law.

The proposed change could, rather, increase the risk to public safety. Many parks are located in remote places, Maine state parks remain understaffed, and parks personnel are unarmed. They rely on de-escalation, first aid training, and, on rare occasions, backup from local or county law enforcement and first responders. Many of the counties where state parks are located continue to struggle to maintain adequate law enforcement presence and emergency medical services. The use of state park campgrounds by victims escaping domestic violence is not uncommon.

Despite its name, Baxter State Park is not managed by the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands but is governed by the Baxter Park Authority and operates in accordance with the wishes of former Governor Baxter, its benefactor.

Currently, the public can enjoy Acadia and Maine's spectacular state parks with reasonable confidence that anyone carrying a concealed handgun is responsible and has undergone handgun safety training. That situation appears to be working, and we do not believe that it needs to be changed.

We ask you to vote LD 829 Ought Not to Pass.