



**Testimony before the  
Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government**

**By Kaitlyn Bernard, Natural Resources Policy Advisor**

**February 7, 2022**

**Re: LD 1513, An Act To Require the Maintenance of a Discontinued Public Road That Provides the Sole Access to One or More Residences**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Kaitlyn Bernard and I am the Natural Resources Policy Advisor for The Nature Conservancy in Maine. I appreciate this opportunity to testify **in support of the amendment that was distributed on February 2, 2022 to LD 1513, An Act To Require the Maintenance of a Discontinued Public Road That Provides the Sole Access to One or More Residences**

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. Working in more than 70 countries, we use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners. TNC has been leading conservation in Maine for more than 60 years and manages approximately 275,000 acres of conserved land across the state. We also work with communities to restore rivers and streams, rebuild groundfish populations in the Gulf of Maine, and develop innovative solutions to climate change.

As a landowner with properties containing abandoned or discontinued town roads, we support the formation of the Maine Abandoned and Discontinued Roads Commission. In many cases, towns do not have adequate records on status of old town roads and there is confusion on the rights of the public to access these roads. In some instances, public use is inappropriate and destructive (for instance, vehicles entering during mud season), and because the roads have not been maintained for years, they are subject to excessive erosion. This leads to environmental damage and leaves the landowner responsible for footing the repair bill. In some cases, the damage can prevent access for emergency vehicles. The review of existing legislation related to abandoned and discontinued roads and clarity on the rights of the landowner and the public is sorely needed.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to The Nature Conservancy if you have questions about our comments or experiences with abandoned and discontinued roads. We would be happy to advise this committee or the future Maine Abandoned and Discontinued Roads Commission as needed.