

Sherri Billings
Fryeburg
LD 676

Testimony in Support of LD 676 – An Act to Fund the Recommendations of the
Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory Council
Submitted by Sherri Billings
Fryeburg, Maine Resident
4/3/2025

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and distinguished members of the
Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

I write to you today as a resident of Fryeburg, Maine, in strong support of LD 676. As someone who calls this rural town home, I urge you to help protect the character, safety, and livability of our communities by funding the conversion of the underused Mountain Division Rail into a multi-use recreational trail.

This bill is not just about infrastructure, it's about values. Fryeburg is a bedroom community with a deep connection to the land, its quiet rhythms, and its people. Turning this dormant rail line into a trail offers enormous potential for outdoor recreation, tourism, small business growth, and public health, all without sacrificing what makes our towns special.

We do not want to see our peaceful rural corridors become conduits for industrial-scale movement of goods. That kind of development brings noise, pollution, and traffic, none of which align with the identity or desires of communities like mine. A multi-use trail, on the other hand, invites local use and respectful tourism. It brings life, not freight.

The rails have sat unused for decades. Restoring them for industrial transport would be costly, disruptive, and out of step with how our towns function and thrive today. Investing in a trail system is a forward-looking solution that delivers benefits now and into the future.

We've seen proposals like LD 138, which would strip away protections for endangered species in the name of development. Bills like this, along with efforts to revive freight corridors through quiet towns, send a message that rural Maine is open for exploitation. But our communities want something different: clean water, open space, and a peaceful, livable future. This trail is part of that vision.

I urge the committee to pass LD 676 and affirm a future for Maine's rural towns that prioritizes people over freight, trails over trucks, and community well-being over industrial expansion.

Thank you for your time and service.

Sincerely,
Sherri Billings