



TOURISM
ASSOCIATION

Senator Saviello, Chair
Representative Tucker, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

RE: LD 901, An Act To Amend the Laws Governing the Determination of a Wind Energy Development's Effect on the Scenic Character of Maine's Special Places

My name is Diane Johanson, I am a resident of Turner, and I serve as the Director of Government Affairs for the Maine Tourism Association. I am pleased to provide testimony today in support of *LD 901, An Act To Amend the Laws Governing the Determination of a Wind Energy Development's Effect on the Scenic Character of Maine's Special Places*.

The Maine Tourism Association represents more than 1,500 members across the state promoting Maine's tourism industry. Most of our members include small and large businesses that provide traditional tourism interests such as accommodations, restaurants, sporting camps, camping, retail establishments, and cultural and heritage attractions. We proudly support promoting the unique quality of the Maine tourism experience.

Tourism is one of Maine's largest industries. In 2016, almost 36 million visitors chose Maine as their vacation destination. Tourism supports nearly 106,000 jobs, or 16 percent of the state's employment. The economic impact of tourism is staggering - \$8.8 billion in total sales and \$596 million in total taxes last year were directly related to tourism.

Part of the Maine experience that draws first time visitors to our state or ensures that those who have visited before choose to vacation here again is our beautiful and scenic landscape. Data from the 2015 Annual Report from the Maine Office of Tourism shows that touring and sightseeing remain one of the most popular interest areas of overnight visitors. Sightseeing, enjoying the ocean views or rocky coast, and driving for pleasure are the most common touring/sightseeing activities among first-time and repeat visitors. Additionally, hiking, climbing, or backpacking and exploring state and national parks top the list for both first-time and repeat visitors for active non-water outdoor activities. That is why it is so important to the tourism industry to keep our scenic vistas in their natural state as much as possible.

Continuing the good work accomplished from 127th Legislature, LD 901 addresses specific areas within our state's borders in which a 15-mile buffer zone and visual impact assessment are required for an expedited wind energy development. Baxter State Park, Acadia National Park, The Caribou-Speckled Mountain Wilderness, Mount Abraham, and multiple viewpoints along the Appalachian Trail all are popular destinations for residents and visitors alike. That is why we support the proposal before you today and ask that the committee give its unanimous approval of LD 991. Thank you.