

April 2021

To: The Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

RE: LD 983 and LD 687– An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Promote the Conservation of Land, Working Waterfronts, Water Access and Outdoor Recreation

Senator Breen, Representative Pierce, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, my name is Stacey Keefer, I am presenting this testimony in my capacity as the Director for the Maine Marine Trades Association (MMTA). MMTA represents over 120 Maine businesses and an industry comprised of boatyards, boat builders, marinas, boat dealers, marine retailers, and other service providers for commercial and recreational boats. Our industry has an approximate \$2.9 billion annual economic impact for the state.

MMTA is asking for the legislature to support either of these proposed bond issues that would help increase conservation and maintain water access for both commercial and recreational boaters.

Working waterfront is a precious resource for Maine’s heritage industries and emerging ocean-based industries. These businesses are water-dependent and rely on infrastructure that is costly to maintain.

The pandemic certainly highlighted the importance of outdoor recreation globally and helped Maine safely attract tourists to keep some economic revenue flowing. New boat sales hit a 13-year high nationally and about a third of those buyers were first time boat owners. Parks and campgrounds were full and stayed busier beyond their normal seasons. Now more than ever it is critical to help our parks, boat launches, and recreation areas stay in good condition with resources needed to keep them operating to help promote responsible outdoor recreation. If our facilities are well maintained, Maine’s natural beauty and world-class outdoor recreational opportunities will continue to help our economy recover.

It comes down to giving back what gives to us. That gateway connection to nature –whether a coastal pier for fishermen to support their family, or a public reserve land canoe launch for a family outing – is where we can show our respect and gratitude for such an abundance of amazing natural resources. If we invest wisely, it will keep giving back. The Maine outdoors give us economic, mental, and physical health. Many would say that value is priceless.

We strongly urge the legislature to help get this bond issue on the ballot. We trust that our legislators will work out an appropriate dollar amount to help us match to federal funds also available to help us with conservation, parks, water access, working waterfronts, and outdoor recreation. Thank you.

Respectfully,
Stacey Keefer

Maine Marine Trades Association, Executive Director