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## Testimony in Support of LD 1156

An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Promote the Design, Development and Maintenance of Trails for Outdoor Recreation and Active Transportation

April 27, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. My name is Jenny Kordick, and I currently serve as Executive Director of Maine Outdoor Brands. I am here today to speak in support of the Maine Trails Bond on behalf of our 170 member brands.

Founded in 2017, Maine Outdoor Brands is an alliance of Maine based outdoor product, service, and retail companies united in their desire to strengthen our state's \$3 billion outdoor recreation economy. Our members include outdoor gear and equipment manufacturers like Sterling Rope in Biddeford, retail stores like L.L.Bean, and outdoor service providers – places like the New England Outdoor Center, Red River Camps, Portland Paddle, and Sugarloaf.

With four distinct seasons, virtually every fresh-air adventure one could want, and a highly collaborative, closely-connected outdoor industry, it's no wonder why so many outdoor brands have decided to call Maine home.

Nature-based activities like boating, fishing, camping, hunting, and snow sports have collectively contributed billions of dollars to the state, and the industry as a whole is growing faster than Maine's overall economy.

Outdoor recreation made up 3.6% of Maine's economy in 2021 – making Maine one of the top five states in the country in the value outdoor recreation added to statewide GDP. And more than 30,000 people work in the outdoor industry in Maine.

We believe the Maine Trails Bond will reaffirm Maine's status as a national leader in outdoor recreation and further boost our outdoor recreation economy.

As we know, the pandemic highlighted the need for close-to-home recreation, and this access has been critical for our outdoor economy. As more people got out outside, industry segments like biking, skiing, hiking, and RVing experienced record sales and unprecedented growth. Manufacturing of outdoor gear and equipment saw an increase in Maine during the pandemic.

The increase in demand for outdoor activities by both residents and visitors has underscored the need for more recreation opportunities, which is why it's critical to pass the Maine Trails Bond

now. The Maine Trails Bond will support design, development, and maintenance of trails – for skiing, mountain biking, snowmobiling, hiking and more. This effort will strengthen our outdoor brand and enhance outdoor recreation in Maine in all four seasons, attract talent and boost local economies.

We should think about investments in trails not only as an investment in our outdoor industry, but in our entire state. Efforts like this are critical to making Maine a desirable place to live, work, visit, and do business.

With continued investment, the outdoor sector can drive an environmentally responsible economy, one that offers good-paying jobs and an unmatched quality of life. I urge the Committee and the Maine Legislature to approve this bond.

Thank you for this opportunity to share these comments.