



*SEEKING COMMON GROUND,
WORKING FOR THE
COMMON GOOD*

Senator Bill Diamond, Chair
Representative Emily Ann Cain, Chair
Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
5 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0005

April 3, 2009

RE: **LD 684**, An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Finance the Acquisition of Land and Interest in Land for Public Land and Water Access, Conservation, Wildlife and Fish Habitats, Outdoor Recreation Including Hunting and Fishing and Farmland Preservation and To Access Matching Contributions from Public and Private Sources

Dear Senator Diamond and Representative Cain and Members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee:

The Maine Council of Churches is a member organization of the Environmental Priorities Coalition that has identified LD 684 as one of its priority bills to support in the 124th Legislature. I'm writing on behalf of the Council to voice our enthusiastic support for continued funding of the Land For Maine's Future Program through the public bonding process. The program has an excellent track record of protecting many of Maine's natural resources and ensuring public access to Maine's special places for all her citizens. The public support for this program is broad and deep.

For the past several years, the Maine Council of Churches has had an active Environmental Justice Program, with a particular concern for the ways in which environmental issues intersect with economic justice for Maine's most vulnerable citizens. We support the Land for Maine's Future Program because it has preserved and expanded access to Maine's lakes, rivers, and ocean waterfront for all of Maine's citizens. One does not have to be wealthy to enjoy Maine's waterways, which are and should be a precious, shared resource for all Mainers.

For the past three years, the Council has been working with Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association to promote local foods and community-supported agriculture and fisheries within local Maine congregations. We encourage people of faith to pledge to consume more local foods, for the sake of both Maine's economy and the environment. The assistance rendered by the Land for Maine's Future program to Maine's working waterfronts and small farms has helped to maintain and strengthen two traditional sectors of Maine's economy. Support of local farming and fisheries helps to strengthen Maine's local food supply in an environmentally sustainable manner.

The Land for Maine's Future program's partnership with local land trusts and trails organizations has aided the creation of a network of hiking, biking, walking, trails throughout the State. This encourages families to enjoy healthy outdoor recreational activities. The establishment of recreational corridors is an invaluable resource to a wide spectrum of Maine's citizens from her active elders to her younger generations of children and teens. The continued support of development of recreational corridors and trail systems helps Maine reach a critical mass of eco-tourism resources that

will encourage and support sustainable tourism. This is good for both our rural economies and for Maine's small business communities.

Please consider supporting the Land For Maine's Future Program with a generous multi-year bond funding mechanism. Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Jill Job Saxby
Executive Director

cc: MCC Public Policy Committee, Environmental Justice Team