



Russell Black  
Senator, District 5

THE MAINE SENATE  
131st Legislature

3 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

### Testimony in Support of L.D. 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**

**Representative Russell Black**

**April 27, 2023**

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. I am Senator Russell Black. I represent Senate District 5, which includes portions of Franklin, Kennebec, and Somerset Counties. As a cosponsor, I appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of LD 1156, which would provide much-needed investments in Maine's trails statewide.

For people in my district, trails are a big part of our heritage of hunting, snowmobiling, hiking, and accessing the outdoors.

Snowmobiling alone is worth \$600 million annually for Maine's economy, with most of that spending happening in rural Maine at lodges, restaurants, mom and pop stores, and equipment outfitters.

We have incredible trails in my district. The High Peaks Alliance has identified more than 1,700 miles of trails out in our area for ATVs, snowmobiles, biking, skiing, and paddling.

Over the past few years, we've seen a noticeable influx of new residents to our region, and these folks are attracted to our trails and outdoor experiences.

A growing number of people can work from anywhere, and their choosing rural Maine. This is great news for local shops, construction workers, and town budgets.

We've got some great trail projects underway in my district, like the Rail Trail Bridge over the Sandy River in Farmington. This will be the longest single-span bridge of its kind in Maine, creating a critical connection for snowmobiles to town. Projects like this help support the economy and local jobs.

The Rail Trail Bridge is projected to generate more than \$860,000 annually to the local economy. Towns, businesses, and organizations across Western Maine have added their names to a growing list of supporters of the Maine Trails Bond.

Investing in trails seems like something that people throughout the state agree on, especially at a time when logging and other jobs in rural Maine are facing significant challenges.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of LD 1156.