

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND
PUBLIC SAFETY

IN SUPPORT OF L.D. 121**

“An Act to Include Brush and Yard Debris in the Definition of "Litter"”

SPONSORED BY: Presented by Senator BLACK of Franklin.
Cosponsored by Representative: BUNKER of Farmington.

DATE OF HEARING: February 3, 2025

Good morning Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. This testimony is being submitted from Kris MacCabe, Landowner Relations Corporal for the Maine Warden Service within the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in support of **L.D. 121**.

This bill amends the Maine Litter Control Act within Title 17 by adding brush and yard debris to the definition of "litter."

Our understanding is that landowners are experiencing an increase in dumping of brush and yard debris on log landings so this expansion in the definition of litter would provide an additional tool for wardens or other law enforcement officers to address illegal dumping.

Wardens across the state respond to illegal dumping or litter cases and commonly come across litter sites across the state during routine patrol. Commonly these dumping sites are composed of yard debris including leaves and woody debris dumped at easily accessible locations for vehicles to turn around. It is also common to see other household items or offal litter dumped with the yard debris at turnout locations or log landings. We are also concerned with the spread of invasive species with brush or yard debris being moved around the State.

With 94% of the state privately owned, access to this private land is a valuable resource. Throughout each year Wardens work with landowners on continuing to maintain public access to private land for recreation. Litter is one of the biggest reasons that landowners shut down land to public access. This is why Wardens and Forest Rangers

participate in our annual Landowner Appreciation Day in September cleaning up trash dumped on private land. Without this continued support to landowners, we risk losing access to millions of acres of land throughout the State.

The Landowner Relations program for the Maine Warden Service within the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife also supports landowners that are having issues using electronic surveillance in common dumping areas to curb activity or catch intentional violators. The program also assists landowners gating off or placing large rocks in areas that may also be common dumping sites to discourage dumping.

We support **L.D. 121** so long as it is narrowly enforced with discretion and isn't used to address extreme situations such as leaves accidentally blowing out of the back of an open truck bed for example. We believe this change increases protection for private landowners who allow for public access and provides Wardens an avenue to assist private landowners with unwanted materials being left on property without permission.