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May 7, 2019

The Honorable Anne Gobi  
Joint Committee on Environment, Natural  
Resources and Agriculture  
State House, Room 513  
Boston, MA, 02133

The Honorable William Pignatelli  
Joint Committee on Environment, Natural  
Resources and Agriculture  
State House, Room 473F  
Boston, MA, 0213

Dear Chair Gobi and Chair Pignatelli,

Mass Audubon thanks the Joint Committee on Environment; Natural Resources & Agriculture for the opportunity to express our strong support for *An Act Establishing the Office of Outdoor Recreation (S.484)*. We urge you to support this legislation, which will create an office of Outdoor Recreation within the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs tasked with promoting outdoor recreational opportunities in our Commonwealth.

From the coast all the way out to the Berkshires, outdoor recreation plays a major role within the Massachusetts economy. The outdoor recreation sector supports over 120,000 jobs and creates \$16.2 billion in economic activity, supporting people in all types of urban and rural communities. Not only does outdoor recreation bring robust economic activity to the state, it is also a critical factor in the Commonwealth's public health as a proven benefit to both physical<sup>1</sup> and mental health<sup>2</sup>. With all of the health and economic benefits that outdoor recreation provides, Massachusetts needs to ensure that everyone knows about the incredible opportunities available to them.

The new Office of Outdoor Recreation will work across health agencies, our tourism and economic development sectors, and relevant stakeholders to promote and market our state's outdoor recreational opportunities. The Office will help connect existing outdoor recreation programs with the public in order to promote their health, social, and economic benefits. They will also work to ensure that recreational amenities are accessible to youth and within low-income communities.

Mass Audubon requests the Committee report favorably on *S.484* so the people of Massachusetts can better utilize our incredible outdoor recreation resources.

Sincerely,  
Mike Cusher, Legislative Director

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<sup>1</sup> Outdoor Time Is Associated with Physical Activity, Sedentary Time, and Cardiorespiratory Fitness in Youth  
Schaefer, Lee et al. The Journal of Pediatrics , Volume 165 , Issue 3 , 516 - 521

<sup>2</sup> Keniger, Lucy E et al. "What are the benefits of interacting with nature?." *International journal of environmental research and public health* vol. 10,3 913-35. 6 Mar. 2013, doi:10.3390/ijerph10030913