Dear Rep. Birch:

I'm your neighbor, on Homestead Trail; we've met walking our dogs across the street at Hillside park. I'm writing today to ask you, as a member of the House Resources Committee, to amend HB 40 and vote for its passage.

We need a bill like this, simply for reasons of public safety. For our dogs, for our kids, walking trails in state parks, or any public lands, we need to feel they're safe, and not feel like we're walking on military lands where a step off the trail could mean tripping unexploded ordnance. These lands aren't military bases; they are public lands.

I'm appealing to you because I know you care about your two labs the way I care about my two husky-labs, and the way my friends in Healy and Palmer care about their dogs. But my friends have lost dogs to traps. And if you or I were to walk our dogs at, say, Fall's Creek, we, too, could lose ours to a trap laid right by the trail.

So, I do hope you support the concept of this bill.

However, it needs amending. In its current form, it's simply not adequate to fixing the problem. 200 feet is nothing to a dog. I'm sure you know yours could cover that distance in seconds. A child could, too. So, it needs to be amended to at least 2000 feet. Just add a zero. Then the problem really would be fixed, and this issue won't have to be revisited by the Legislature. You can get on to other pressing matters.

And, it's not too much to ask a trapper to walk that distance; I do it all the time on my snowshoes, and it doesn't take much time. This will reduce user conflicts on our trails. This is about sharing public lands among all State citizens.

Thanks for fixing this once and for all. And I'll look forward to seeing you and your dogs this summer -

Marybeth