

Chairman Carson, Chairman Tucker, and Members of the Committee:

As a resident of Maine who has worked on international resilience and climate change adaptation issues for nearly 20 years, I was thrilled to read through LD1679. If enacted, this bill would vault Maine from the back of the pack to the American forefront on addressing the urgent issues presented by a rapidly warming climate. It's difficult to overstate the urgency of climate change and the challenges that it will pose for Maine businesses, communities, and ecosystems.

I work closely with Arctic communities, businesses, and scientists to address climate change adaptation issues because that region is warming much faster than the mid-latitudes, but also because it provides important advance information for regions like New England that are not far behind. What I've found is that the rate of warming, and its impacts, are far exceeding expectations. What that means for Mainers is that we have very little time to reduce greenhouse gas emissions before this accelerating rate of warming transforms our forests, bays, and wetlands into an unrecognizable condition and imposes health and safety costs on all of us in Maine.

CO2 lasts for decades in the atmosphere, so we can expect warming to accelerate until mid-century regardless of our current efforts to curtail emissions. What happens after that, of course, depends entirely upon how quickly we transition away from fossil fuels in the coming years. While it is our responsibility to reduce Maine's contribution to the emissions that are causing climate change, and to do so ambitiously, it is also essential that we plan a response to the warming impacts that we know are already baked into the atmospheric system by the greenhouse gases that have already been released.

We need to plan for population growth as heat stress sends Americans northward, focus on reducing disaster risk in the face of extreme weather events, prepare health care systems to respond to new disease vectors, inoculate our nature-based businesses to adapt as climate change alters ecosystems in unpredictable ways, and develop tools that will help Mainers plan and adapt in the face of considerable uncertainty over the coming decades.

As with elsewhere around the world, the most vulnerable will suffer the greatest impacts from climate change, so we must also develop strategies to lift and empower Mainers who might be in the crosshairs. This means improving job opportunities and worker rights, ensuring affordable health care in the face of new threats, and providing additional support for the elderly, among other things.

We also need to prepare the Maine workforce to take advantage of the coming economic transition away from fossil fuels. Renewable energy jobs are increasing far faster than jobs in fossil fuels, and Maine should train a workforce ready to lead this new economy.

I wholeheartedly support the creation and empowerment of the Maine Climate Change Council, as well as the new greenhouse gas emissions targets, and hope this committee agrees. If passed, I would be thrilled to support the Council in any way I can.

Joel Clement, Wayne Maine