

Testimony of Ivan J. Fernandez, University of Maine Climate Change Institute, before the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs of the 131st Maine Legislature, in support of LD 142, "*An Act to Fund Climate-related Service Work*"

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs: my name is Ivan Fernandez and I support LD 142. I have been Professor at the University of Maine for four decades, with my research focusing on the biogeochemical responses of ecosystems to a changing chemical and physical climate. For the past 20 years I have served on various advisory panels for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and its Science Advisory Board. I have been particularly committed to providing the best available science in support of state policy, and most recently have had the privilege of serving on the Maine Climate Council and co-Chairing the Council's Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. I also serve on the Maine Climate Corps Task Force.

The escalating evidence of a changing climate and its accumulating effects on Maine are clear as chronicled in the University's [Maine Climate Future](#) reports, the Council's 2020 Scientific and Technical Subcommittee 370 page report "[Scientific Assessment of Climate Change and Its Effects in Maine](#)" and the [one year update](#) of that report. That evidence is all around us, with rising sea levels swallowing coastal infrastructure, a warming Gulf of Maine driving dramatic shifts in fisheries like lobster with impending population declines, weather extremes from downpours and drought inflicting dire hardships on Maine farms, insect pests and warming altering the character of Maine's future forests, fading winters and winter whiplash challenging a recreation industry, and heat and Lyme disease altering all aspects of the lives of Mainers. However, as these indicators of a rapidly changing climate are accelerating, so too are the solutions. The [Maine Won't Wait Progress Report](#) this past year makes clear the many ways in which Maine is responding and the many opportunities for Maine people to engage in this work. There is no greater call for service and experiential learning for all ages than for opportunities to be engaged in

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this work and to develop the skills and work force for a thriving Maine future. I see this every day as a professor and as a citizen here in Maine.

It is for this reason that I urge your support of LD 142. This bill will invest in the development of the Maine Climate Corps to provide the type of experiential learning noted above, and growth in this program will allow these opportunities to grow beyond any one sector or region in Maine. These opportunities exist throughout Maine, from Fort Kent to Kittery, in all socio-economic settings, and from coastal fishing communities to central Maine farmland to interior forest neighborhoods. I am personally enthusiastic about how this program can grow along with its impact on assuring a resilient Maine. As is typically the case with science-based environmental initiatives, the investment costs are far overshadowed by the economic value of the benefits, let alone the importance of cultivating a thriving and resilient Maine citizenry.

These comments are mine alone and are not offered on behalf of University of Maine or any other affiliation.

Thank you.

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