

Testimony in support of LD 142, *An Act Fund Climate-related Service Work*
To: Sen. Joseph Rafferty, Representative Michael Brennan, and Members of the
Committee On Education and Cultural Affairs
From: Stacie Haines, Volunteer Maine Commissioner, Maine Conservation Voters
Development Director

Good Afternoon Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Stacie Haines and I live in Augusta. I work at Maine Conservation Voters and I am a state commissioner at Volunteer Maine. I am testifying in support of LD 142.

As directed by Maine's Climate Action Plan, *Maine Won't Wait*, Volunteer Maine has undergone an extensive project to design and implement a Maine Climate Corps over the last few years.

Maine Won't Wait highlighted that there is a heightened urgency to address the climate crisis that we face right now. The cost of doing nothing is too great for Maine's ecosystems, species, infrastructure, and public health.

To that end, there is an increased need to add significant human resources to move climate action strategies forward in our state. The greatest opportunity for engaging in this work with a large group of citizens representing all ages, abilities, and background lies with a Climate Corps.

Last year, there was a bill that requested funding for 5 Maine Climate Corps Program leadership positions and 20 participants of the program. While the bill passed unanimously through the ENR committee, the Climate Corps ended up with funding for one leadership position and 4 member positions.

Furthermore, any possibility of federal funding died along with Build Back Better.

We weren't dissuaded. Volunteer Maine looked at this as a pilot project year to prove the on-the-ground effectiveness of Maine's Climate Corps. We scaled back our focus areas to Energy Education and Outreach and Home Energy Conservation and Management.

Starting in May, 4 service members will serve at Downeast Community Partners, with a focus on reducing energy costs of low-income households. Service members will engage the community in energy education, collect energy usage data, analyze energy savings, and create instructional videos for clients.

The pilot project will help some of Maine's most rural and marginalized communities address the climate crisis. Members will receive a livable wage—leading to more equity in who can serve—and on-the-job training and weatherization technician skills and certifications needed to work at energy efficiency companies.

I am incredibly proud of the work that Volunteer Maine and our partners have done to prove the effectiveness of this program through a pilot project.

It is up to all of you, and other members of the legislature, to decide now if you see it's worth and want it to be implemented on a larger scale.

Please also consider that here in Maine, we need young professionals as a large percentage of our workforce is set to retire in the upcoming years. Service opportunities have the potential to attract young people to Maine or allow them to stay here.

People who serve in a community tend to set deep roots there. In Maine, 25% of the young adults who move here for a year of community service stay to make this state their home.

It is a priority for each Climate Corps service member to develop their skills in collaboration with Maine's communities and organizations. This will provide the on-the-job training that is so desperately needed for young professionals to get to the next level in their career pursuits such as the weatherization certification that will be provided through the pilot project this year.

Today, I urge you to pass LD 142, An Act to Fund Climate-related Service Work. The climate crisis is the most pressing issue of our time. And, this is a well-planned pathway forward to implement this critical work that will benefit Maine's people and our environment.

Stacie Haines
AUGUSTA
LD 142

Testimony in support of LD 142, An Act Fund Climate-related Service Work
To: Sen. Joseph Rafferty, Representative Michael Brennan, and Members of the Committee
On Education and Cultural Affairs
From: Stacie Haines, Volunteer Maine Commissioner, Maine Conservation Voters
Development Director

Good Afternoon Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Stacie Haines and I live in Augusta. I work at Maine Conservation Voters and I am a state commissioner at Volunteer Maine. I am testifying in support of LD 142.

As directed by Maine's Climate Action Plan, Maine Won't Wait, Volunteer Maine has undergone an extensive project to design and implement a Maine Climate Corps over the last few years.

Maine Won't Wait highlighted that there is a heightened urgency to address the climate crisis that we face right now. The cost of doing nothing is too great for Maine's ecosystems, species, infrastructure, and public health.

To that end, there is an increased need to add significant human resources to move climate action strategies forward in our state. The greatest opportunity for engaging in this work with a large group of citizens representing all ages, abilities, and background lies with a Climate Corps.

Last year, there was a bill that requested funding for 5 Maine Climate Corps Program leadership positions and 20 participants of the program. While the bill passed unanimously through the ENR committee, the Climate Corps ended up with funding for one leadership position and 4 member positions.

Furthermore, any possibility of federal funding died along with Build Back Better.

We weren't dissuaded. Volunteer Maine looked at this as a pilot project year to prove the on-the-ground effectiveness of Maine's Climate Corps. We scaled back our focus areas to Energy Education and Outreach and Home Energy Conservation and Management.

Starting in May, 4 service members will serve at Downeast Community Partners, with a focus on reducing energy costs of low-income households. Service members will engage the community in energy education, collect energy usage data, analyze energy savings, and create instructional videos for clients.

The pilot project will help some of Maine's most rural and marginalized communities address the climate crisis. Members will receive a livable wage—leading to more equity in who can serve—and on-the-job training and weatherization technician skills and certifications needed to work at energy efficiency companies.

I am incredibly proud of the work that Volunteer Maine and our partners have done to prove the effectiveness of this program through a pilot project.

It is up to all of you, and other members of the legislature, to decide now if you see it's worth and want it to be implemented on a larger scale.

Please also consider that here in Maine, we need young professionals as a large percentage of our workforce is set to retire in the upcoming years. Service opportunities have the potential to attract young people to Maine or allow them to stay here.

People who serve in a community tend to set deep roots there. In Maine, 25% of the young adults who move here for a year of community service stay to make this state their home.

It is a priority for each Climate Corps service member to develop their skills in collaboration with Maine's communities and organizations. This will provide the on-the-job training that is so desperately needed for young professionals to get to the next level in their career pursuits such as the weatherization certification that will be provided through the pilot project this year.

Today, I urge you to pass LD 142, An Act to Fund Climate-related Service Work. The climate crisis is the most pressing issue of our time. And, this is a well-planned pathway forward to implement this critical work that will benefit Maine's people and our environment.

