

Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 142: ***An Act to Fund Climate-related Service Work***

To: Sen. Joseph Rafferty, Representative Michael Brennan, and Members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

From: Mark Stelmack, Portland Climate Action Team

Date: January 31, 2023

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Mark Stelmack, I am an Environmental Engineer and I live in Portland, the largest and most diverse city in the state. I am testifying on behalf of the Portland Climate Action Team (PCAT), a volunteer group actively involved in climate mitigation projects in Portland. As an environmental engineer I am keenly aware of the growing climate crisis impacting our society and volunteer my personal time helping to implement activities designed to confront the impacts. I am writing to testify in support of LD 142.

PCAT recognizes that the Maine Climate Corps will:

- Provide the human power to conduct climate projects on the ground throughout the state by reaching out to Maine residents to conduct beneficial energy assessments and assist with energy efficiency and water conservation activities.
- Help mitigate the negative effects of climate change through engagement in projects that promote renewable energy production, energy conservation, and efficient transmission and transportation of energy.
- Strengthen our state's communities and support historically marginalized populations facing the impacts of climate change by working to increase residential energy efficiency statewide and providing services that promote healthy and energy efficient homes for senior citizens and low-income families.
- Provide climate ambassadors who understand the challenges involved in immigrant communities, different languages, and different cultures. The need to connect to immigrant families is a vitally important issue statewide and particularly in Portland, Maine's largest and most ethnically diverse city.
- Provide a living allowance at a livable wage for service members and the certification and/or job training in the environmental and clean energy sectors to kick-start careers. This provides members with tangible skills and helps build their resume for a future career.

In addition, the Maine Climate Corps can:

- Collaborate with established support programs in Maine such as Color of Climate (COC) which centers youth of Color and their experiences and perspectives on climate change and environmental justice. COC's mission is to center Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) youth voices, experiences, and narratives within the climate change crises and within environmental justice issues, especially because BIPOC communities and individuals are often the most impacted by these issues. <https://gcsmaine.org/color-of-climate>

- Help bring the message to Maine residents, in a language they understand, as to why the climate is changing, how it is changing, and how we can mitigate its worst impacts while adapting to those that will occur.
- Assist stakeholders including municipal staff with implementing the tangible goals established in Portland and South Portland's joint climate action plan, *One Climate Future*.

As chair Brennan certainly appreciates, the diversity in many of the state's largest cities offers an untapped potential in the fight against climate change if appropriately managed. Nelson Mandela once said, "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart."

We ask that you vote to pass LD 142.

Thank you for reading my testimony.