



**Testimony in support of LD 142, An Act to Fund Climate-related Service Work
To the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
by Josh Caldwell, Climate & Clean Energy Outreach Coordinator
January 31, 2023**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, distinguished members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Josh Caldwell. I am the Climate and Clean Energy Outreach Coordinator at the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM), and I am testifying today in support of LD 142, An Act to Fund Climate-related Service Work.

Climate change is a pressing issue for Maine, our nation, and the world, and it will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. To adequately confront climate change, mass mobilization in every sector of our society is paramount. Last year, we were excited to see legislation implementing the Maine Climate Corps pass, and now it is time to facilitate the success of that program by ensuring that it is funded and equipped to handle the challenges climate change presents in Maine. Not only would a funded Maine Climate Corps Program help to mitigate the negative effects of climate change, but it would also provide an opportunity to conduct projects that would strengthen our state's communities and support historically marginalized populations.

Maine's Climate Action Plan

The *Maine Won't Wait* Climate Action Plan, crafted through a bipartisan process in 2020, makes clear that substantial work needs to be done in order to prevent the worst outcomes of climate change and protect our natural and human communities from climate instability. LD 142 would fund a program with aims that parallel the eight core strategies outlined in *Maine Won't Wait*, ensuring that all of the work conducted by the Climate Corps would contribute to reaching Maine's established climate goals. Further, the Climate Corps also has an explicit directive to pursue projects that advance equity and justice and disproportionately benefit overburdened communities in Maine, extending the good work of the Maine Climate Council to communities throughout Maine.

Maine Won't Wait sets ambitious yet achievable climate goals that have been determined by the most recent available scientific assessments of our climate. To hit these essential goals in the most cost-effective manner, Maine will need to utilize all available human resources, and a

program such as the Maine Climate Corps would effectively channel those resources toward the most-needed climate solutions for Maine.

Support for Communities

A funded Maine Climate Corps Program would provide an opportunity to complete important service projects where Maine has the most need. Maine's historically marginalized people and regions would be prioritized, and projects would be determined according to a thorough systematic index established by a network of Maine organizations that directly engage with climate as an issue area. [A recent review](#) of Americorps program efficacy conservatively estimated an average \$2.02 return for each dollar invested in Americorps projects and found that Americorps participants, on average, are 27% more likely to find a job after service than non-participants. The benefit of a Maine Climate Corps Program to participants and the communities they serve is evident.

Opportunities for Mainers

A Maine Climate Corps Program would provide ample opportunity for Mainers, particularly our state's youth, to engage with our state, our environment, and our climate in a substantive and rewarding way. This would help with promoting youth retention in state, encouraging continued long-term engagement with Maine's natural resources, and growing a culture of stewardship that will be needed to preserve our state's beauty and productivity for generations to come. An analysis of Americorps members in Maine from 1994 to 2021 shows that 34% of respondents moved to Maine for service, and more than half of those stayed after their program due to ties developed in state. In order to actualize the full range of benefits the Maine Climate Corps would provide for Maine, the program must be adequately funded and staffed with appropriate benefits for participants.

Further, as climate change becomes an increasingly primary focus for our federal government and national organizations, funding opportunities for climate solutions are rapidly growing. Maine can only take advantage of these new funding opportunities if we have the resources and capacity to channel funds effectively. A Climate Corps Program such as the one that would be funded by this legislation would provide eligibility for Maine to take advantage of federal funds and conduct beneficial work that otherwise would not be able to happen.

For these reasons we urge the Committee to support the passage of this important climate bill. Thank you for your consideration, and I welcome any questions that you may have.