

**February 17, 2023**

**Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs**

**Representative Melanie Sachs – Chair**

**Senator Margaret Rotundo – Chair**

**Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government**

**Representative Holly Stover**

**Senator Tim Nangle**

Good morning, Chair Rotundo and Sachs, and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee. And, Good Morning Chair Nangle and Stover and members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government.

My name is Lee Umphrey the President and CEO of Eastern Maine Development Corporation, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization based in Bangor that promotes economic and workforce development, small business lending, community planning for municipalities and overall business support to people, businesses and communities helping them find and leverage resources to make a difference.

Our organization, as a leading regional coordinator within the State's Community Resilience Partnership, is here today to relay firsthand our strong belief that an increase in funding would further ensure the important progress Maine is making continues.

Maine's bold efforts to combat Climate change is gallant but needs to be stronger. The bipartisan legislation to establish the Maine Climate Council was just the beginning. Governor Mills deserves lots of credit for prioritizing this fight against climate change while promoting renewable energy opportunities. We need to continue this momentum by increasing funding for the Community Resilience Partnership's grants in the Governor's proposed budget. To date, the Partnership has helped multiple communities throughout Maine to assess and take steps to get ready for these climate related risks.

The partnership's framework aims to bring communities together to find and share solutions. This consensus building effort is a partnership between the state, towns and organizations. EMDC started this discussion with our 2021-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) exercise and report that identified Climate Resiliency as a major goal. Our CEDS plan builds upon DECD's Maine Economic Development Strategy and the Maine Won't Wait report.

EMDC's Climate Resiliency project Goals:

- Establish new climate and energy technical assistance capacity to support communities in Region 4
- Recruit and enroll communities in Region 4 to participate in the Community Resiliency Program through a robust outreach project
- Enrolled communities are eligible to apply for funds to support clean energy and climate resiliency projects
- EMDC will recruit and provide technical assistance to a minimum of 15 communities during the 2-year project
- Training and Peer Learning events will be hosted during the 2-year period to inform more about the benefits of addressing climate resiliency as part of their strategic planning process. Lessons learned and best practices will be shared.

- EMDC is committed to working with a high Social Vulnerability Index and low capacity for developing resiliency plans at the local level without additional assistance
- EMDC is a results-oriented Economic Development District. Reporting metrics are being tracked to document the results of our work and modify program components to meet the goals of this project

We are an organization that works equally with the Maine's Department of Labor and Department of Economic and Community Development. While a big part of the Community Resilience Partnership is to mobilize and prepare communities, the significant underpinning of this program ensures the workforce development system is fully aligned with economic development. To help meet the wind, solar, biofuel, and broadband sectors as part of the evolving energy industry's workforce demands, we are building community awareness of new training opportunities to prepare people at the local level to connect with jobs.

As the workforce development administrator in nine counties in partnership with the Department of Labor, we work with industries, businesses, community colleges and others to prepare workers for jobs in this green economy. These efforts go hand and hand with the Climate Resiliency work of the Partnership and your support for increased funding should take stock at how this cohesive, collaborative endeavor is an investment in Maine's future. Doing so is both practical and forward thinking in meeting the challenges of the climate crisis we all face.