

Senator Rotundo and Representative Sachs, Senator Nangle and Representative Stover and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee and the State and Local Government Committee:

My name is Doretta Colburn and I am a resident of Waterford where my husband, Ted, and I own a bison farm, grow organic produce and make artisan bread. I am also the pastor of the local Congregational Church where I co-facilitate community programs on climate change awareness. It is through these personal investments in my town that I have witnessed the value of the Community Resilience Partnership grants in benefiting local communities, as my own. That is why I am here to speak to LD 258 and urge you to vote “ought to pass.”

Early in 2021 Ted and I spoke with our Select Board about what our town was doing in light of climate change preparedness. We believed that something needed to be done to help our community prepare for climate impacts and the rising costs of food and energy. We were invited to continue the conversation, but weren’t quite sure what we might bring to that dialogue until we learned in December of 2021 of the Community Resilience Partnership grants. We shared it with the Select Board who approved our setting up a separate committee to explore what we might do. Building a team of co-leaders and calling ourselves PEERWaterford for Partners in Energy, Efficiency, and Resilience, we worked with our Select Board to enroll in the program and began holding meetings to discuss needs, opportunities and set priorities. We began with addressing energy efficiency through an application for heat pumps for our Municipal Building which also houses Stoneham Rescue and the firehouse enabling us to improve our center of refuge.

A portion of that initial grant helped us develop a community garden on the fairgrounds as a source of education and community-building. During the fair, we incorporated gardens into the Little Hands for Agriculture exhibit where children could learn about and sample a harvest of fresh produce and herbs. It has become a place that is educational, inviting and fun.

In September we were awarded a grant for solar panels to further improve our municipal building.

For a rural town of under 2,000 residents, these grants provide opportunity that our town would otherwise not be able to afford. They better equip our community in managing the impacts of increasing weather extremes, and build an awareness of energy efficiency and resilience as was evident when the Select Board of a neighboring town invited us to share our experience with them. They are now looking to enroll soon.

The value of these grants will have lasting impact on the health and wellbeing of our residents and demonstrate Maine as a leader in climate resilience. For these reasons, I encourage you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 258.