

Susan Duncan
Phippsburg
LD 2225

Dear Sen. Rotundo, Rep. Sachs, and distinguished members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs:

We are writing to express our support for LD 2225, titled "An Act to Provide Funding to Rebuild Infrastructure Affected by Extreme Inland and Coastal Weather Events." This crucial legislation aims to allocate \$50,000,000 from the Maine Budget Stabilization Fund to the Department of Transportation's Infrastructure Adaptation Fund.

We are residents of Phippsburg, and like many other towns on the coast of Maine, Phippsburg is home to several private working fishing wharfs, some that are used by single fishermen, others that serve as many as 22 lobstermen and fishermen during the late spring, summer and fall. The storms of January 10 and 13, 2024, wreaked havoc on our wharves and docks, rendering at least one of our lobster businesses non-functional.

With only 20 miles of working waterfront left in the State, we are very concerned about conserving and supporting our waterfront access points and our commercial fishing businesses. Fishing and lobstering are critical to Maine's economy and our Working Waterfronts represent our unique heritage and culture. With the extreme damage done by the storms, we are very concerned that many wharf owners will not be able to afford to rebuild. They know they need to build stronger, smarter and higher to achieve resiliency against climate change and future storms, but these costs will be prohibitive for many wharf and commercial fishermen and we risk losing these valuable working waterfront properties to private developers and others looking for waterfront properties for high end homes, condos and resorts. This will continue to significantly erode our Working Waterfront.

LD 2225 will be a critical financial resource for Maine's fishermen and harvesters, fishing families, and coastal communities in this crucial rebuilding effort. Many fishermen were not refunded by insurance companies who consistently said the January storms were "an act of God" and therefore not eligible for insurance reimbursement. FEMA funds are not available to these small businesses and the SBA loans require both insurance and evidence of income in order to consider a loan. Many lobstermen currently have no income if they cannot load up bait and off-load lobsters and fish.

It is urgent that you enact this legislation and allow for the immediate and fair disbursement of funds to address recent damages caused by the January storms. While January, February and March are slower months for fishermen, by April, the commercial fishermen need to be back in full operation if they are to sustain their businesses and to continue to support this vital sector of Maine's economy.

LD 2225 will help preserve Maine's iconic working waterfronts and support the economic well-being of coastal communities that are heavily reliant on commercial fishing for prosperity. We urge you to approve LD 2225.