



**MAINE MUNICIPAL
ASSOCIATION SINCE 1936**

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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Support of

LD 2225 -An Act to Provide Funding to Rebuild Infrastructure Affected by Extreme Inland and Coastal Weather Events

March 6, 2024

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Rebecca Graham, and I am testimony in support LD 2225 on behalf of the 70 municipal leaders who were elected by their peers to serve on the Association's Legislative Policy Committee and directed to establish MMA's position on bills of municipal interest.

As this committee is abundantly aware, your communities have been significantly impacted by storms that are becoming increasingly more frequent, with little time to recover between emergency events, let alone repair vital infrastructure. Maine's towns and cities were built along the highways of the past, that form their identity, and the very threats for their secure future.

Knowing this was happening, some coastal communities began exploring any path to preserving and protecting their historic downtowns in 2017 seeking federal and regional funding that could be leveraged to address this. Some communities understand this may change their very culture, necessitating moving their centers and residents out of harms way. They also rapidly learned that without an important state partnership, they were competing with the needs of the biggest cities in the U.S. for federal mitigation funding and unlikely to win.

These conversations were tough in an abstract that has now become the broken face of reality as Mainer's watched their historic landmarks, homes, and roads wash away with no route home for many individuals in the immediate aftermath. Communities cannot rely on those same impacted property taxpayers alone to rebuild, particularly in coastal and mountain communities where their very livelihoods have been cut off by the same natural forces. The replacement of a single failed culvert built to allow better fish passage costs \$2 million. The cost of a single culvert can consume an entire municipal budget in most of Maine's communities, and we now know, are not as resilient as we had hoped.

It is for this reason that officials support this effort and appreciate the inclusion of public safety, and both public and private systems that provide significant community benefits. Thank you for considering the municipal perspective on these issues. If you have any questions about the Association's position on this bill, please do not hesitate to contact me at rgraham@memun.org or 1-800-452-8786.