

Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

*Testimony on LD 2225 – An Act to Rebuild Infrastructure Affected by Extreme Inland and Coastal
Weather Events*

Presented by the Maine Better Transportation Association

March 6, 2024

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Maria Fuentes. I am speaking to you on behalf of the Maine Better Transportation Association (MBTA) in favor of LD 2225.

MBTA is a statewide organization with 700 members comprised primarily of companies, but also towns, individuals, and non-profits that plan, design, build, maintain, or use the state's transportation system. Our members include transportation construction and engineering firms, public works departments, rail, marine and bus companies, airports, and many users of the system.

We support the intent of this bill which is to provide \$50 million in the Maine Infrastructure Adaptation Fund to help Maine communities rebuild after the devastating storms experienced in the last few months. Our family lives in Hallowell, so like all of you, have seen the devastation to businesses and individuals that the storms caused. A few local businesses have reopened while others have not.

As a state, we often don't have the funding to always build or maintain infrastructure the way that we would like to but do the best we can. For instance, for many roads in the state, the best that can be hoped for is that they get a skim of Light Capital Paving every seven or so years. Because rehabilitation and reconstruction costs so much more, the state must prioritize some "basket case" roads with skinny mix so that they don't completely fail. This bill would enable some towns to make improvements that are more resilient, so they can better adapt to future weather events.

MBTA appreciates that the program would allocate \$25 million to leverage federal funding for making investments in areas that support long-term resilience to minimize future weather events. In the last round of funding, Hallowell was fortunate to be one of 37 communities to receive a grant from the Maine Infrastructure Adaptation Fund.

We have also seen the success of the municipal culvert program. This program is historically underfunded and the \$5 million targeted for it would help many more municipalities by prioritizing culverts to reduce flooding in communities with infrastructure that has the highest risk of failure.

Thank you for considering these comments today and for the demanding work of your Committee.