

March 4, 2024

Chair Rotundo, Chair Sachs, and honorable members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs:

My name is Ford Reiche of Freeport. I am travelling and apologize for not being able to testify in person. I am writing to support funding of LD 2225, "An Act to Provide Funding to Rebuild Infrastructure Affected by Extreme Inland and Coastal Weather Events" specifically as it relates to Maine's historic lighthouses.

I, along with our family foundation, The Presumpscot Foundation, have owned and completely restored four Maine structures on the National Register of Historic Places, including Halfway Rock Light Station in Casco Bay. Additionally, I have for the past several years served on the grant application review teams for the two largest funders of historic preservation in the State of Maine.

Maine's lighthouses are a significant element of Maine's brand, as they are among the most iconic in the nation. Maine's historic lighthouses took a beating of unprecedented breadth in the storms of January 10 and 13 this year. This recent damage is a sign of things to come with worsening climate conditions. No other structures are in harm's way like these historic lighthouses, and it is clear that we will lose many of them to future storms if protective measures are not put in place soon. The challenge is made greater by the fact that most of Maine's lighthouses are now in the hands of local non-profits with very limited resources. They welcome the general public as visitors, but most have trouble finding the resources to manage even routine painting and basic maintenance. Grant funding for historic preservation in Maine is practically non-existent; it is very rare to find grants in excess of \$10,000.

Right after the January storms I was joined by Bob Trapani, executive director of Rockland based American Lighthouse Foundation, to conduct a six-hour helicopter inspection of the 25 or so Maine lighthouses damaged in the January storms. Our damage assessment totals in the millions of dollars, with even more is needed to implement the types of protective measures which will be effective in limiting the damage from the future intense storms which are a certainty.

Without significant financial assistance to repair this damage and implement these mitigation measures, it needs to be understood that we will simply lose these irreplaceable and iconic treasures of Maine's heritage. There is a possibility that some of the lighthouse stewards will apply to FEMA for aid, but that will not be nearly enough to repair and protect these structures. State money, if provided, can greatly help by providing cost share match for FEMA, assistance with ineligible repairs, and help to mitigate the risks for the future.

Please support the preservation of Maine's lighthouses with appropriate funding.

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