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Testimony of Representative Matthew Beck in Favor of

LD 457, An Act to Fund Climate Resiliency Projects Related to the Repair of Campus Infrastructure Used for Active Transportation and Outdoor Recreation

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

March 3, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and esteemed colleagues of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Matthew Beck, and I have the privilege of representing House District 122, the easternmost section of South Portland, which includes the beautiful campus of Southern Maine Community College (SMCC).

I would like to enthusiastically lend my support to **LD 457, An Act to Fund Climate Resiliency Projects Related to the Repair of Campus Infrastructure Used for Active Transportation and Outdoor Recreation.**

If you haven't had the opportunity to visit the SMCC campus, I encourage you to do so soon. Aside from its impressive academic facilities, the college boasts athletic fields and walking trails with gorgeous panoramic views of Casco Bay and the surrounding islands. You can easily see several nearby lighthouses including South Portland's Bug Light and Spring Point Light, and Portland Head Light in Cape Elizabeth. The college is also located immediately adjacent to Willard Beach, a popular seaside spot for Mainers and tourists for more than 100 years.

When my wife and I moved to South Portland in the early 90's, what was then "Southern Maine Technical College" had a daycare facility for the children of students and faculty. Although we didn't attend the school, we were able to take advantage of some vacant daycare slots for our kids. We would laugh about the million-dollar views children could take in from the playground equipment and wonder if they appreciated how good they had it.

The walking trails on the SMCC campus have been enjoyed by visitors from all over the world. Some people have even chosen points on the trail to exchange their wedding vows. Sadly, the storms that ravaged the Maine coast last winter caused significant damage to portions of the trail, forcing its partial closure, while also damaging some of the facilities on the campus itself.

When we reached out to college officials, they told us that while they shared our dismay that portions of the trail needed to be closed for safety reasons, they had no intention of spending the money necessary to repair the trail or conduct the engineering studies necessary to determine the scope of the work that would be needed. Their focus and their resources needed to be directed at the repair and protection of the SMCC facilities that are vital to their core academic mission.

The loss of some of the most magnificent sections of this beautiful trail in South Portland is a loss for our entire state. Please vote "ought to pass" on LD 457 so that we can dedicate the funds necessary to restore this jewel on our coast.

In closing, I'd like to express my gratitude to Senator Carney for submitting this important legislation and giving me the opportunity to co-sponsor it.