

Mayor and Council Offices

Mark Dion

Mayor

March 11, 2025



Testimony of Mark Dion, Mayor of the City of Portland,
In Support of

**LD 1, An Act to Increase Storm Preparedness for Maine's Communities, Homes and
Infrastructure**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development

Senator Curry, Representative Gere and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Mark Dion, Mayor of Portland and I write in support of LD 1 on behalf of the City of Portland. Portland is home to nearly 70,000 Mainers and a vibrant center for business, the arts, and tourism. Our city was impacted by severe storms in 2023 and 2024 that caused major damage to public infrastructure and private property due to heavy rain, high winds, and exceptionally high tides. More than a year later, we continue to work on repairing the damages from that storm and look for opportunities to enhance our resilience for future storms.

I want to appreciate President Daughtry, Speaker Fecteau, Leader Stewart, Leader Faulkingham and Governor Mills for working together to develop and introduce this bipartisan legislation.

As climate change intensifies and severe weather events become more frequent, it is imperative that we support proactive measures to protect Portland and other vulnerable coastal communities in hopes of protecting property and reducing long-term recovery costs and impacts from future storms. LD 1 furthers this crucial effort, particularly through the Safeguarding Tomorrow through Ongoing Risk Mitigation Revolving Loan Fund, the State Resilience Office and Fund, and the Home Resiliency Program and Fund.

The Safeguarding Tomorrow program will provide grants and loans to support municipal infrastructure projects to reduce the impact from future storms and fund important positions at the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) that will enhance emergency alert and warning communications including training and education at the local level. These funds are critical as we seek to invest in projects that increase the resilience of vital infrastructure. We have seen other communities in the country face challenges in getting timely and accurate communications out to warn the public about impending risks; it is important to invest in the technology, training and staff required for quick and effective emergency messaging in Maine.

Flooding is a major hazard that impacts Portland and better data to help understand and communicate flood risks is a priority. The State Resilience Office and State Resilience Fund will support efforts to enhance hydrologic data modeling and the development of a risk data hub that will provide community members with better information about flooding risks.

Finally, the Home Resiliency Program and Fund would provide essential financial assistance to homeowners, enabling them to make critical upgrades such as reinforcing roofs, elevating structures, improving drainage, and installing impact-resistant windows. These measures not only enhance individual property resilience but also contribute to broader community preparedness, ultimately reducing the burden on emergency response systems and disaster relief efforts.

Investing in pre-disaster mitigation is a cost-effective strategy that saves taxpayer dollars by minimizing the destruction and displacement caused by natural disasters. Moreover, ensuring that all homeowners, including those in vulnerable and low-income communities, have access to these grants promotes equity and long-term sustainability.

Taken together, these programs will fortify Portland and many other communities in our state for the future. For these reasons, the City of Portland supports LD 1 and we respectfully ask that you do as well.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of this Portland perspective.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Dion", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Dion
Mayor
City of Portland, Maine