

Maine Climate Action **NOW!**

To: Maine Legislature Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

From: Ezra Sassaman, Advocacy Coordinator, Maine Climate Action Now

Date: May 2, 2025

Re: LD 1870: An Act to Establish a Climate Superfund Cost Recovery Program to Impose Penalties on Climate Polluters

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Ezra Sassaman. I live in Bar Harbor and represent Maine Climate Action Now! (MCAN), a coalition of sixteen grassroots nonprofit organizations from across Maine united by a desire to progress our state forward and engage in transformative action in response to the climate crisis.

In the past years, Maine has experienced firsthand what climate scientists have long warned about. Winter storms in late 2023 and early 2024 caused staggering destruction to public infrastructure, personal property, and Mainers' lives in all parts of the state.

In coastal towns, these storms destroyed piers relied upon for fishing and marine travel. Inland and in western Maine, many communities suffered from flooding at levels rarely before seen. Across the state, Mainers were drastically affected by electrical outages paired with impassable roads, a dangerous combination for community safety.

My home island of Mount Desert Island experienced "massive destruction on a proportion never seen", including lasting damage to the local Shore Path, flooding, road closures and blockages, destruction of beaches, damage to local small businesses, and damage to the Town Pier.¹

Across the state, communities are preparing themselves to stay resilient in the face of future, likely more destructive, storms. But funding often falls short of paying for the full damages.²

But what is making these storms worse than ever before? We know increasing ocean surface and global average temperatures create the conditions capable of producing more extreme storms. This is because heat and moisture fuel the intensity of storms. Warmer air holds more moisture and warmer oceans give more energy to developing

¹ Carrie Jones. "[Massive destruction on a proportion never seen](#)". *Bar Harbor Story*. January 11, 2024. Accessed May 2, 2025.

² Emmett Gartner. "[A year since the region saw disastrous flooding, western Maine officials say they're better prepared](#)." *Maine Monitor*. December 22, 2024. Accessed May 2, 2025.

Maine Climate Action **NOW!**

storms. To make matters worse, as sea levels rise, coastal areas become more vulnerable to flooding than before, because storm surges start from a higher baseline.

Climate scientists have been warning about these dangers for decades. Today, we know fossil fuel interests were also aware of these dangers, but chose to engage in lying and propaganda campaigns rather than reveal a truth that might endanger their business model.

In 2015, investigative journalists uncovered internal company documents showing that Exxon scientists have been warning their executives about “potentially catastrophic” anthropogenic (human-caused) global warming since at least 1977. Researchers and journalists have subsequently unearthed additional documents showing that the US oil and gas industry writ large—by way of its trade association, the American Petroleum Institute—has been aware of potential human-caused global warming since at least the 1950s.³

Coincidentally, the 1950s also saw the invention of the “You break it, you bought it!” sign.⁴ Today, these signs are in lots of stores and reinforce our gut understanding that the people who caused problems should be responsible for fixing them.

If this mindset applies to something as small as a dropped item in a pottery shop, it should certainly apply when the future of the entire planet and humanity is at risk. To me, this is the guiding principle that leads me to support LD 1870. We can no longer afford to clean up damages that someone else is responsible for.

This fight will not necessarily be easy – large companies that have a negative influence on the world (tobacco, polluters, etc.) have an unfortunate history of fighting regulations tooth and nail. But this does not mean we should give up. Lying is not okay, especially when the consequences of these lies are so drastic. Legislation like LD 1870 is a clear signal that we will not stand for this behavior any longer.

For the above-stated reasons, our coalition encourages you to vote “ought-to-pass” on LD 1870. Thank you.

³ Supran, Geoffrey, Stefan Rahmstorf, and Naomi Oreskes. [“Assessing ExxonMobil’s Global Warming Projections.”](#) *Science*, Vol. 379, No. 6628. January 13, 2023. Accessed May 2, 2025.

⁴ Daniel Lametti. [“If You Break It Do You Really Have to Buy It?”](#) *Slate*. July 28, 2012. Accessed May 2, 2025.