

15 May 2025



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Dear members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology,

I'm writing to express my support for LD 1967, "Resolve, to Establish the Maine Home Energy Navigator and Coaching Pilot Program". I write in my capacity as director of retrofitMAINE, an initiative of the nonprofit passivhausMAINE. My work is predominantly focused on supporting residents in both Freeport and Lewiston, especially those of low- and moderate-income levels, as they seek to make their home more comfortable and affordable.

It is a familiar refrain that Maine has old housing stock - over a third of our homes are older than 1960. As we see by comparison with our improving building standards, our older housing stock does not come without its challenges. These challenges, however, can be overcome. Residents having more affordable monthly utility bills is a realistic and natural result of efficiency-focused home upgrades. Unfortunately, though, most residents I've had the opportunity to interact with simply don't have the capacity to become experts in building science and energy efficiency and then act as their own contractor to complete these upgrades. Residents would also have to understand which upgrades would be worth their investment and further be able to organize this into a prioritized master plan - and somehow find all the grants, rebates, incentives, and financing options for which they may be eligible.

Clearly, there's a lot involved. There are many energy coach/navigator efforts across the state trying to fill this need but we're unable to have the necessary impact as we struggle with multiple challenges. Many communities and organizations attempting to start programs like this have yet to overcome the barriers. retrofitMAINE's program is newer but has been able to launch largely because of our community-engaged approach, partnering with community-based organizations like our local rotary club, community services, and CAP agencies. These partnerships help us support each other and extend our reach and capabilities, but we're still limited in our capacity and funding with the extent of this need. All of us hear the concern and overwhelm from residents and, while retrofitMAINE's coaching program is new, I've already heard appreciation for its existence and how people weren't aware of these upgrades or incentives.

There really is a lot involved in making Maine homes more livable and affordable, but coaching programs like that of retrofitMAINE and many others reduce this burden on residents and could make a significant dent in the state's emissions as we help people recognize and achieve the benefits of decarbonization or other better building practices. It is only through this effort and others like it that we can ensure the goals outlined in *Maine Won't Wait* are truly feasible.

In order to increase the efficiency, reach, and impact of these navigator and coaching programs, we need the consistency and prioritized funding that a statewide pilot's oversight will provide. I hope this Committee will strongly recommend passing LD 1967.

Thank you for your consideration,
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