



Testimony of Island Institute in Support of LD 2234, An Act to Increase the Debt Limit of the Vinalhaven Water District

March 19, 2026

Senator Lawrance, Representative Sachs, and Members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee, my name is Nick Battista, and I am testifying on behalf of Island Institute in support of LD 2234.

Island Institute is a 42-year-old nonprofit organization based in Rockland, Maine. We boldly navigate climate and economic change with island and coastal communities to expand opportunities and deliver solutions. Much of our work takes place in the communities that are highly dependent on fishing, and the bulk of these communities are east of Damariscotta.

Some of these communities have public water infrastructure and one of these communities, Vinalhaven, needs support in the form of lifting its debt limit to make some much needed upgrades. The current debt limit for the water district was set at \$1.5m in 1978 and hasn't changed since. If that had been indexed to inflation, the water district today would have had the power to borrow about \$7.4m. The water district is only looking for an increase of \$2.5m, for a total borrowing power of \$4m.

The upgrades contemplated by Vinalhaven water are important to maintaining the continued reliability of the drinking water system. Part of the system being upgraded dates back to 1910. These upgrades also improve the resilience of the system to climate change – an important consideration on an offshore island where the geography constrains and limits backup options for supplying the community with water.

I urge the Committee to support LD 2234, increase the borrowing amount for the water district, and help the community implement important infrastructure projects.