

Testimony in Support of LD 143, An Act to Support Rural Service Programming and Promote Volunteerism

January 29, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Molly Siegel and I am writing in support of LD 143, An Act to Support Rural Service Programming and Promote Volunteerism.

I served as an Island Fellow for two years on Isle au Haut, a remote island with approximately 50 full-time residents six miles from Stonington. During my fellowship, I taught in the one-room school, led a community-wide effort to create more affordable housing, wrote a federal grant proposal for the power company, and conducted a survey on the need for medical services on the island.

Island Fellows typically become integral parts of the communities they are placed in. Several individuals from my Fellows cohort have remained in their communities. While I no longer live on Isle au Haut, I still come back to visit and volunteer with the organizations that I worked with as a fellow.

Small municipalities, schools, and non-profits are often shorthanded. This is not unique to islands. dedicating a fellow to new and ongoing projects, communities can expand their capabilities beyond the day-to-day work of running a town. I hope that Maine can build on the success of the Island Fellows program and allow more communities to grow their capacity through targeted service programs.

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