

Testimony In Favor on LD 142: An Act to Fund Climate-related Service Work

Good Morning Senator Rafferty and Representative Brennan and esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Luke Shorty and I reside in Winthrop, Maine and am the chair-elect of Volunteer Maine, Maine's Commission for Community Service.

I come to you today to support LD 142, An Act to Fund Climate-related Service Work. The Maine Climate Corp, as established in statute, addresses climate related issues ranging from transportation, energy, housing, public health, and many other aspects of Maine's environment and communities using evidence based direct service projects in collaboration with Maine communities. These sectors that are addressed by Maine's Climate Corps are critical to the economic prosperity of our State. We know that infrastructure is a critical part of our economy to move goods, services, workers, tourists throughout our State and to help retain workers here in Maine. These sectors are also critical in conserving the natural environment that helps drive our tourism industry.

I know from firsthand experience how powerful service can be to our economy and our environment. I served two terms in the Maine Conservation Corp working on trails as far north as White Cap in the 100 mile wilderness, and parks such as Camden State Park and Acadia National Park. Working in these parks in developing trails, building bridges, stairs, erosion protection structures, etc. helped build the capacity for these trails and areas to handle larger groups of tourists and hikers, while preserving the natural beauty of our State and minimizing the impact on our watersheds, streams, rivers, flora and fauna. On top of this work, this is where I started to develop the leadership skills, and professional skills that I continue to utilize today in my administrative work in the educational sector. It speaks to how volunteerism is a win-win situation both for the organization that uses volunteers and for the volunteers themselves as they build networks and skill that can help them as they transition from service into the workforce.

Funding the Maine Climate Corp in the way as described in this bill allows for fifty Corp members to be available to address issues throughout the State ranging from erosion of roadways and watershed protection to the invasive nature of the green crabs that are threatening our fisheries. From the impact of the spruce bud worm or the emerald ash borer on our forests and thus impacting our ecosystem that supports our fish and game species to helping households deal with soaring energy costs during difficult and more severe winter and summer weather. The price tag may seem large, but I argue that not paying this price tag, would be more costly in the long run. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure and the fiscal impact of this bill translates to \$30,000 per Corp member which includes health insurance leaving a small amount of dollars for the Corps member to sustain themselves on.

I thank you for your time today in allowing me to speak on behalf of service and on how this bill will help bolster our economy in Maine while also addressing State concerns regarding climate change. I will gladly answer any questions and or comments you may have at this time to the best of my ability.

Sincerely,

Luke Shorty
Winthrop, Maine

1/31/2023