

**Testimony of
George Lapointe, Mayor, City of Hallowell
Before the Joint Committee on Appropriations
13 February 2024**

In favor of LD 2191, An Act to Provide Relief to Small Businesses Affected by Severe Weather-related Events

I am George Lapointe, Mayor of the City of Hallowell, Maine. I am testifying in favor of LD 2191, an Act to Provide Relief to Small Businesses Affected by Severe Weather-related Events.

Hallowell, a city of about 2,500 individuals on the banks of the Kennebec River, was heavily impacted by the flooding and extreme winds that occurred on 18 December 2023. On that day, the waters of the Kennebec River rose about 8 feet above the riverbank, flooding Front Street and parts of Water Street. The water rose rapidly which limited the time that business owners and residents had to evacuate in advance of the flooding. Many people helped move business inventory and equipment to higher ground. These efforts helped greatly but many buildings and businesses were heavily impacted.

People did what they could to move inventory and equipment but the impacts of the flood were severe. An estimated 6 businesses had their business level flooded, one basement business with up to 9 feet of river water. Other businesses, probably close to 40, had their basements flooding which impacted electrical systems, plumbing and heating, telephone systems and equipment and inventory.

The impacts on businesses were made worse because the flood occurred the week before Christmas which many businesses rely on to end the calendar year on a high note.

In response to the impacts on businesses, a number of businesses set up GoFundMe sites to assist with flood recovery. The City of Hallowell is establishing a business flood assistance program to help businesses with flood related impacts. But these good efforts do not approach the magnitude of the flood damage. The financial impact of the flood on Hallowell businesses could easily be up to \$1 million.

The proposed LD 2191 would help Hallowell businesses to recover from flood impacts. I understand that many businesses were impacted along Maine's rivers and coast and will likely be seeking assistance from wherever they can get it including the funds proposed in LD 2191. However, the proposed funding can be used for businesses in many Maine towns and cities because the economic health and recovery of all businesses will benefit the state overall, and indirectly will help Hallowell as well in the long term.

For these reasons, I support LD 2191 and thank the bill's sponsor and co-sponsors for this life-line funding to help businesses throughout Maine that were impacted by recent storms.

I am away from Maine on a personal issue but Hallowell's City Manager, Gary Lamb, is present to respond to any questions that Committee members have on this testimony. Respectfully yours, Mayor George Lapointe, mayor@hallowellmaine.org, (207-557-4970)