

Testimony of Maureen Mooney-Howard  
Chair, Otisfield Community Resilience Committee  
March 1, 2024, in favor of the Supplemental Budget LD2214

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee. My name is Maureen Mooney-Howard and I am a resident of Otisfield and the Chair of the Otisfield Community Resilience Committee. Otisfield is a small town located in the Oxford Hills with a population of approximately 1,850 (and counting). One of Otisfield's finest qualities - and with our rapid growth, no longer our best kept secret - is our Thompson and Pleasant lakes that rank amongst the cleanest in the state of Maine. Additionally, we are blessed with two Ponds and the Crooked River, rated Class A, that makes up Otisfield's entire western boundary. Living near and on these very special bodies of water make us acutely aware of the present and potential future dangers of climate change. Where coastal communities are affected by rising seas, we are being affected by 100-year rain events that wash out culverts and pollute our lakes with sediment overflow and higher temperatures that are fostering deadly algae growth in our lakes.

We are very grateful to have received two Community Action Grants through the Community Resilience Partnership. Our first proposal was funded in December 2022. With these funds we purchased and installed heat pumps in our town office and revised and printed the *Protecting Otisfield's Watersheds* pamphlet. I have brought copies of our pamphlets for you.

Our second grant was funded in October 2023. With these funds we have recently completed an energy audit of our town's buildings and the creation and distribution of emergency kits and informational mailer to all residents. We are working on a solar predevelopment study on town property and a pollinator garden at our Community School. I am anxiously awaiting the ground to unfreeze so that we can start digging in the dirt with our children.

We do not have a town manager in Otisfield. We do, however, have 3 dedicated members of our Selectboard. One of them, unable to be here today, has asked me to read the following statement.

"The municipal officers have been searching for over 15 years, to find funding sources for the upgrading of our Town Office heating and cooling systems. We've been dependent upon oil heat and window air conditioners. Our old building with intermittent mold issues, has been an environmental and monetary challenge.

Otisfield is a small rural town, with no commercial tax basis, an aging population, and high taxation payments to our school district and the County. With this tax burden, our residents simply couldn't afford the needed and environmentally friendly replacement of our HVAC system."

Our partnership with the Center for Ecology Based Economy, and their connections to the Community Resilience Partnership has been a life saver. It's brought our environmentally friendly HVAC system to life! We are SO grateful for the opportunity to be part of such a lifeline to make rural Maine more resilient. Thank you to all who made this possible." - Rick Micklon, Selectman, Town of Otisfield

I personally would like to compliment the Partnership Program manager and her staff with the program model they have set up and with her personal assistance. Many grant recipients, especially in small rural towns like Otisfield, are adeptly guided by a local service provider. We are volunteers with little or no experience in grant writing and implementation. We couldn't do it without them

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Governor's Office, Senate and Representatives for your support in helping our community adapt to the present and future impacts of climate change by funding this Partnership and I hope that your support continues. Thank you for your time today.