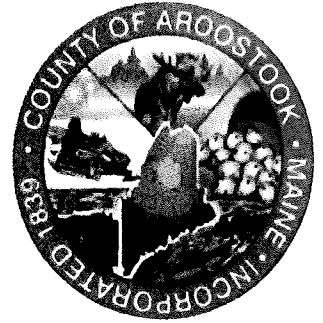


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Testimony of Darren Woods, Director, Aroostook County Emergency Management Agency

LD 1, " An Act to Increase Storm Preparedness for Maine's Communities, Homes and Infrastructure"

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Darren Woods, I am the Director of the Aroostook County Emergency Management Agency located in Caribou, Me. I am here today to testify in support of LD 1.

I have been involved in emergency services on many levels for 33 years and specifically in emergency management for the past 27 years. I am also the current chairperson for the County EMA Directors Council representing the 16 counties in Maine.

No matter what any of us think about climate change, we can all agree that we have seen a change in natural disasters in Maine over the last 20yrs. The events we have endured have taught us lessons along with reviews of disasters across the United States that can't be ignored.

As we consider those along with world events, it is obvious that now, more than ever, we have to consider the roles of emergency management and emergency preparedness. We cannot ignore these facts and should not be relying solely on federal disaster support. Bills such as this one are extremely important to the future of the State of Maine.

LD 1 Part B proposes \$10 million for the Disaster Recovery Fund. It is imperative that we have that funding to ensure the state can fulfill its obligation of 15% of the costs for federally declared disasters. This becomes incredibly important to all communities across Maine as they struggle to recover from the effects of a disaster.

I also want to be sure that there is an understanding of how important this kind of legislation is to the counties and the local communities.

When disaster strikes it is imperative that we understand that these emergencies begin at the local level which are then supported by county emergency management agencies and then Maine Emergency Management. This bill can enhance those capabilities that are so important to all jurisdictions in our state.

In Aroostook County for example, the county office covers incidents in the 112 unorganized townships, and of the 64 other communities, none of them have full time emergency managers. This basically means that the county emergency management office staff of 4 who have other duties assigned to them must be there to provide help and guidance to these communities and citizens.

There are many points in this bill that will ensure that support not only continues but is improved as we move forward. One example of this is communications that are crucial to an organized disaster response that will not only be safer but will aid in the recovery of the affected area. The majority of the time we can reduce injuries and deaths by just getting the word out to our citizens.

In closing, investments need to be made in emergency management in Maine, and those investments should also reflect needs at the county and local level.

Thank you for listening, I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.