

Maine Grocers &  
Food Producers  
Association  
PO Box 5234  
Augusta, ME 04332  
207.622.4461  
info@mgfpa.org



**RETAIL  
ASSOCIATION OF  
MAINE**  
Voice of Maine Retail

Retail Association of Maine  
45 Melville Street, Suite 1  
Augusta, ME 04330  
Tel: 207.623.1149 | Mobile:  
207.240.7377  
curtis@retailmaine.org  
www.retailmaine.org

## IN SUPPORT – LD 1 An Act to Increase Storm Preparedness for Maine's Communities, Homes and Infrastructure February 27, 2025

Dear Senator Curry - Chair, Representative Gere - Chair, and members of the Committee On Housing and Economic Development,

My name is Christine Cummings, and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Grocers & Food Producers Association. I am here on behalf of the Retail Association of Maine and the Maine Grocers and Food Producers Association, testifying in joint support of *LD 1 An Act to Increase Storm Preparedness for Maine's Communities, Homes and Infrastructure*.

Our business trade associations represent Main Street businesses including independently owned and operated grocery stores and supermarkets, general merchandise retailers, and convenience stores, food and beverage manufacturers, distributors and supporting partners — together representing more than 450 members statewide. Maine's retail sector employs more than 85,000 Mainers.

Maine's retailers and small businesses have been through a lot for a few years now. During the December 2023 storm, small businesses lost holiday sales that they'll never be able to recover and a number of Maine's independent grocers lost perishable food due to the prolonged power outages and equipment that ceased operating due to flooding. Our sector faced disrupted supply chains, power outages, and infrastructure damages, leading to significant financial losses and challenges in serving our communities during critical times.

In the wake of December's devastating storm, our two associations took proactive steps to support the numerous businesses affected across the state and we established the **Maine Business Relief Fund**<sup>1</sup>. Inspired by a successful relief effort in Vermont following a similar catastrophe, the initiative aimed to provide crucial financial assistance to Maine's small businesses in their recovery from the storm's impact.

The fund offered grants up to \$2,500 to cover expenses such as equipment replacement, operating expenses, supplies, and assistance with cleanup, etc. The goal was to help meet immediate needs until further support was available. The fund launched on January 4, 2024 and with private donations, we raised and disbursed more than \$400,000 to nearly 200 businesses. Applicants included restaurants, grocers, specialty gift shops, hair stylists, tourist and seasonal rentals, property managers, inns and hotels, daycares, breweries and farms. However, for the December storm alone, we received more than \$2.7M in requested funds from 369

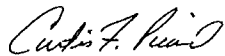
<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mainebusinessrelieffund.com/>

applicants. Our fund did not begin to address the additional coastal flooding which occurred in January 2024 or the lack of snow that affected other seasonal businesses this time of year.

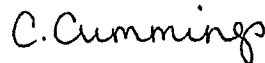
We and our business members were pleased to see the State allocate additional funding including the \$10 million through the Business Resilience and Recovery Fund to help off-set the hefty financial damage. However, these storms highlight the pressing need for immediate investment in long-term resilience strategies to avoid future costly damage and rebuilding.

Our industry is committed to serving the people of Maine, especially during emergencies. The proactive measures outlined in LD 1 help ensure uninterrupted access to essential goods and services. By investing in storm preparedness, we can better serve our communities and support the state's overall resilience. We urge the committee to support LD 1 and recommend its passage. This legislation represents a vital step toward safeguarding Maine's infrastructure, businesses, and residents from the increasing threat of severe weather events.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



Curtis Picard, President & CEO,  
Retail Association of Maine  
45 Melville St., Augusta, ME 04330  
curtis@retailmaine.org | 207-623-1149



Christine Cummings, Executive Director,  
Maine Grocers & Food Producers Association  
PO Box 5234, Augusta, ME 04332  
christine@mgfpa.org | 207-622-4461