

*132nd Legislature*  
***Senate of***  
***Maine***  
*Senate District 29*

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*Testimony of Senator Anne Carney introducing*  
**LD 457, An Act to Fund Climate Resiliency Projects Related to the Repair of Campus Infrastructure Used for Active Transportation and Outdoor Recreation**  
*before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs*  
March 3, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Warren, and esteemed colleagues on the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, I am Senator Anne Carney, proudly representing Senate District 29, which includes South Portland, Cape Elizabeth and part of Scarborough. It is a pleasure to be with you today to introduce LD 457, “An Act to Fund Climate Resiliency Projects Related to the Repair of Campus Infrastructure Used for Active Transportation and Outdoor Recreation.”

This legislation, if passed, will invest \$1 million in climate resiliency projects to repair historic structures on the campus of Southern Maine Community College, especially those used by members of the community for active transportation and outdoor recreation. The goal is to repair and restore Fort Preble and the trails which run over it. What I found in my quest to help SMCC and our community repair the damage caused by last winter’s storms is that most of our grant opportunities exclude educational institutions from applying. This would create a new pathway to fund these important repairs.

Portland Harbor has long been the maritime hub of our state, since even before Maine became independent from Massachusetts. Fort Preble was built in 1807 on the northeastern shore of what was then Cape Elizabeth to help protect our nation’s nascent economy by enforcing the 1807 Embargo Act, which prohibited American cargo ships from trading with the British and French.

Fort Preble then served an important naval purpose to help defend Portland Harbor in the War of 1812, the Civil War, and all the way through World War II. During this final war, it was especially crucial in protecting the Todd-Bath Iron Shipbuilding Corporation shipyard next door as Mainers made a crucial contribution to the war effort by constructing hundreds of Liberty Ships for the U.S. Navy.

The military decommissioned Fort Preble in 1950, and the State of Maine transferred it shortly thereafter to the institution which would become Southern Maine Community College. The college has stewarded this landmark, and the trails that run over and around it, for the decades since, helping to preserve its history and maintain open access for students, visitors, and the South Portland community.

Unfortunately, last winter's storms interrupted that access by undermining the structural integrity of this centuries-old fort, and indeed the whole eastern coast of the SMCC campus. In order to keep the public and its employees safe, SMCC made the tough decision to fence off access to the fort and some of its trails. This decision disappointed many in the community, but it is understandable given that the full extent of the damage to Fort Preble and the SMCC's coastal infrastructure is still unknown.

SMCC needs to conduct an engineering study to understand the scope of the threat and what work must be done to fix the damage in a cost-effective and enduring manner. Unfortunately, just the study costs over \$100,000, not to mention the repairs themselves, which could total in the millions once the fort, the trails, and academic and administrative buildings are included.

This legislation will help to cover the cost of this undertaking, seeking to work in partnership with private, local, and potentially federal funding. This bill will not be a panacea for Fort Preble or the academic infrastructure which surrounds it, given the constantly growing threats posed by climate change, sea level rise, and strengthening storms, but it is a necessary investment in coastal resilience for a vital educational institution in our state.

It would also go a long way to restore and protect access to trails and coastal infrastructure used for recreation and active transportation, as the Spring Point Shoreway passes over Fort Preble on its way to connect Willard Beach with Bug Light Park and the South Portland Greenbelt. These trails are part of what makes South Portland a walkable and active coastal community, and it is important for us to come together to invest in their future.

I'll close by sharing a personal story about Fort Preble and this section of coastline. Some of you may know that cycling is a passion of mine. One of my favorite routes is what I like to call the "Tour de District 29." I leave from my house in Cape Elizabeth, pass by Two Lights (Cape Elizabeth Light), head up Shore Road to Portland Head Light, continue out to Willard Beach, take the Spring Point Shoreway up over Fort Preble to get to Spring Point Ledge Light, and then spend some time at Bug Light appreciating the Liberty Ship memorial and the significant contribution our community and state made to the victory in WWII as a result of the dedication of all who worked to build the Liberty Ships. I then head west on the Eastern Trail and make my way to Scarborough Beach and then Higgins Beach before heading home on Route 77. Each of these scenic areas received heavy damage last winter. The storms and the resulting damage can still be seen along the "Tour de SD 29." In particular, the washout forced the closure of the Shoreway along Fort Preble, and the damage will endure without an investment of resources. I believe that with some resources for at least an engineering study, the community, alums and others who enjoy the Shoreway will step up to support restoration and reopening of this section of the SMCC campus and the Shoreway.

I hope you will join me in supporting this investment in our coastal recreational and educational infrastructure.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to introduce this bill. I welcome any questions you may have.

Anne Carney  
State Senator, District 29