



Office of the President

**TO: Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy  
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs**

**FROM: Dr. Kristen Miller, President, Southern Maine Community College**

**RE: Testimony Neither For Nor Against LD 457, An Act to Fund Climate Resiliency Projects  
Related to the Repair of Campus Infrastructure Used for Active Transportation and  
Outdoor Recreation**

**DATE: March 3, 2025**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

SMCC's waterfront campus is not only a vital educational institution but also home to a historic and scenic landscape that is deeply valued by the community. However, the devastation from recent storms has severely impacted our coastline, causing significant damage to the greenbelt, Fort Preble, and other public areas. More critically, the erosion threatens key educational facilities that serve our students and support Maine's workforce development. Rising sea levels and climate change continue to pose a growing risk, and without strategic investments, the long-term sustainability of both our campus and its historic landmarks remains uncertain.

We are actively evaluating options to ensure our facilities remain intact and to implement measures that protect against future erosion. However, our ability to fund repairs and long-term mitigation for Fort Preble and the greenbelt would significantly impact our budget and our capacity to invest in solutions for our educational infrastructure. To address this challenge, we are working with community members, the City of South Portland, and other organizations to explore partnerships for fundraising and support. While we are committed to being part of the solution, SMCC cannot lead this effort alone, as our primary responsibility remains providing high-quality education and workforce training to Maine residents.

In response, SMCC has taken immediate action to ensure public safety by securing unstable areas while working to preserve access to the greenbelt and Fort Preble. We recognize the historical and cultural significance of this site and remain committed to maintaining public access. At the same time, we must prioritize our core mission of educating Maine's workforce, ensuring that any fundraising or restoration efforts do not come at the expense of our students, faculty, or essential campus infrastructure.

We appreciate Senator Carney's leadership in bringing attention to this issue and welcome discussions on how best to preserve and enhance public access. However, as we move forward, it is critical that we seek long-term solutions that address both the preservation of this historic site and the protection of our educational facilities—ensuring that SMCC can continue to serve students and the broader community for generations to come.

Thank you for your time, I am happy to take any questions.

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