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Testimony of Rep. Lori K. Gramlich in support of
**LD 560, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Improve
Coastal Climate Resiliency**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine and honorable members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, I am Lori Gramlich. I have the honor of representing House District 131, which is the lovely seaside community of Old Orchard Beach, and of serving as Assistant House Majority Leader. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today as the lead cosponsor in support of **LD 560, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Improve Coastal Climate Resiliency**.

Beach erosion has devastating impacts, not only on our environment but also on our coastal economy. That's especially true in communities like mine, where our beaches are the cornerstone of our local economy and also serve as a protective buffer between us and the incredible might of the waters of the Gulf of Maine. In light of sea-level rise and extreme weather events, these precious resources have sustained serious damage and continue to face grave threats.

Throughout my time in the Legislature, I have worked on initiatives to protect our beaches and coastline. In fact, the very first bill I submitted as a newly elected first-term legislator was to protect our beaches and sand dunes, and I have continued my focus in this policy area, including during my time as House chair of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. I am proud of the work we have done and continue to do in this arena, but I also know that we must do more in light of the gravity of our situation.

A prime example of the threat our beaches and coastline are facing is the damage my community of Old Orchard Beach sustained in January of 2024. Back-to-back winter storms caused unprecedented flooding and damage to residences, businesses and infrastructure. In some cases, people lost the entire first floors of their homes. Roads were closed for weeks or months. The impact of these storms was nothing short of devastating to Old Orchard Beach, specifically Ocean Park, which was hit particularly hard but was by no means the only community in Maine to face such staggering damage.

The reality of global climate change and the extreme weather events it causes can often seem like a far-off problem - a problem for other states, perhaps California or Florida, to grapple with. January 2024 made it clear that climate change is not a distant threat; indeed, it is knocking at our door.

More than a year later, Old Orchard Beach residents and other coastal Mainers are still recovering from the effects of 2024's extreme winter storms. We cannot change the past, but we can recognize that these events foreshadow future extreme weather. We absolutely cannot afford to be unprepared. With roughly 3,500 miles of coastline, Maine and its residents are uniquely vulnerable to future extreme weather events along our shores. The cost of preparedness pales in comparison to the price tag of responding after the fact.

LD 560 is one key to ensuring we are ready. It would send a \$75 million bond issue out to Maine voters for approval, and if approved, the funds would be used to award grants to regional, county, municipal and Tribal entities to support climate resilience efforts along our coastline. I would like to take a moment to emphasize the importance of including counties here. Maine's county-level emergency management agencies play such an important role in disaster preparedness, response, mitigation and recovery – something I have seen firsthand and deeply appreciated in York County.

Last winter, it was my community and a number of other coastal towns that faced devastation. But let me be clear: Any of our many, many coastal communities could be next. Let's make sure we have done all we can to prepare and protect the property and indeed the safety of the Mainers who live in those communities.

Thank you for your consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have for me.