



Richard A. Bennett  
Senator, District 18

THE MAINE SENATE  
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

**Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs on  
LD 1433, Resolve, to Establish a Working Waterfront Infrastructure  
Engineer Corps Pilot Program and to Conduct a Feasibility Study of a  
Higher Education Service Corps Program**

**April 24, 2025**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs: I am Senator Rick Bennett of Oxford; and I have the honor of serving 14 communities in Western Maine in the State Senate. I am pleased to cosponsor LD 1433, "Resolve, to Establish a Working Waterfront Infrastructure Engineer Corps Pilot Program and to Conduct a Feasibility Study of a Higher Education Service Corps Program."

I am speaking in support of LD 1433, a vital piece of legislation that will help Maine prepare for and adapt to the growing threats of climate change. As sea levels rise and extreme weather events become more frequent, the risks to Maine's infrastructure, economy, and communities are mounting. According to the Maine Climate Council, more than 21,000 coastal jobs could be at risk from rising seas by 2050. The devastating impacts of the 2023 winter storms in western Maine and the coastal storms of January 2024 are sobering reminders of the urgent need for action.

LD 1433 offers a proactive solution. It proposes the creation of an Engineer Corps program through the University of Maine to recruit and train engineering students in climate resilience. These students will conduct infrastructure vulnerability assessments and support project planning in communities across the state. Oversight will be provided by Maine Sea Grant in collaboration with Volunteer Maine and the University of Maine's College of Engineering. This program not only helps municipalities lacking technical capacity but also provides students with valuable hands-on experience and career development.

The legislation also builds on the success of the Maine Climate Corps. In 2021, Representative Rielly sponsored LD 722, which led to the creation of the Maine Climate Corps through a study conducted by Volunteer Maine. The resulting report, *Maine Climate Corps: Inspired by History. Designed for Today*, laid out a framework for structuring a statewide service program grounded in volunteerism and public-private partnerships. This effort culminated in the passage of LD 1974, bringing the program to life.

Since then, the Climate Corps has demonstrated clear impact. One shining example is the partnership with Downeast Community Partners, where Corps members conducted home energy audits, educated residents, and earned nationally recognized Building Analyst Professional credentials. One community member, deeply moved by the results, noted in her exit survey: "This program needs to be scaled up!"

LD 1433 will do just that. It proposes a feasibility study for establishing service corps programs at Maine's colleges and universities. This new Higher Education Service Corps Program will expand opportunities for students to engage in community-based service, support local climate and infrastructure initiatives, and drive workforce development and economic growth across the state.

By supporting LD 1433, we are not only preparing Maine for the impacts of climate change; we are also investing in the next generation of professionals who will lead us through it. These programs are smart, forward-looking, and grounded in the needs of our communities.

I strongly urge you to vote in favor of LD 1433.