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Testimony of Representative Nina Milliken presenting
LD 1382, An Act Regarding Dam Repair
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Good afternoon, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and friends and colleagues on the best committee in the Maine Legislature. My name is Nina Milliken and I am happy to represent the lovely people of Blue Hill, Brooksville, Castine, Sedgwick, Surry and Trenton. I am happy to be here to present my bill, **LD 1382, An Act Regarding Dam Repair**.

Maine is home to more than 1,000 dams, scattered across nearly every corner of our state. They serve many purposes — from power generation to flood control, water supply, recreation and more. But many of these structures, some of them over a century old, are quietly falling into disrepair. According to state and federal assessments, a troubling number of our dams are in poor or unsatisfactory condition, and in some cases pose high hazard potential.

The Maine Legislature already has a fund established to support dam repair and construction. It has existed for a long time but has not had any money in it for well over a decade, as far as I can tell. The bill I am presenting today simply asks that an allocation of $5,000,000 be put into this currently empty fund. Additionally, it puts a limit of $1,000,000 per loan.

In the establishment clause of the fund it states:

The Dam Repair and Reconstruction Fund, referred to in this section as the "fund," is established within the department. The department shall administer the fund and make low-interest loans from the fund for purposes pursuant to this section.

It goes on to say that municipalities and quasi-municipal corporations or districts can apply for these low income loans.

Currently, in Hancock County, there are three dams that are in the process of being abandoned by the salvage company that purchased the Bucksport Mill after it closed. These dams create three

significant bodies of water, Silver Lake in the Town of Bucksport, Alamoosook Lake in the Town of Orland, and Toddy Pond which stretches 7 miles and is shared by the towns of Orland, Penobscot, Blue Hill and Surry. These bodies of water have been where they are for well over a century.

I currently have two bills in the Environment and Natural Resources Committee to establish quasi-municipal entities to take ownership of these dams. While I am pretty confident that these bills will pass, the burden that the cost of these dams will put on our local taxpayers could be lessened should these loans be available to the entities I am working to create.

And this help, of course, would not just be limited to my district. Dover-Foxcroft has a dam that has been making headlines lately and the Town of Dover-Foxcroft would also probably benefit were these loans available. Indeed, there are almost certainly ailing dams in every legislative district in Maine.

I would suggest changing the amendment slightly by taking out the section that says "Initiative: Provides one-time funding for the Dam Repair and Reconstruction Fund to provide length of service awards to eligible volunteer firefighters and emergency medical services personnel."

I also would like the committee to consider allowing private companies to apply for loans through this fund because some of the dams we are talking about may be privately owned but present real concerns for public safety.

I have included in my testimony a map of Maine's dams and their hazard potential. The map clearly indicates that this issue is not one that we can ignore. Should one of these dams fail, there could be serious implications for human safety. Lives could be lost.

As always, I appreciate all of your time and consideration. I am happy to try to answer any questions.

Maine dams by hazard potential classification

■ High ▨ Significant ■ Low ▨ Undetermined

Caribou

Presque
Isle

Houlton

Millinocket

Lincoln

Calais

Bangor

Bucksport

Rumford

Waterville

Bar Harbor

Augusta

Lewiston

Portland