



Stacy Brenner
Senator, District 30

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony of Senator Stacy Brenner in support of
**LD 1312, “An Act to Provide a Source of Revenue for School Construction
and for the Land for Maine’s Future Trust Fund”**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

November 14, 2025

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and honorable members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee:

I want to begin with a poem by Russell Libby, a mentor to many of us in Maine’s agricultural and conservation communities. In *Obligations*, he writes:

*If a man about five foot six could clear this land,
Lay stone walls,
Haul and hew timbers,
Raise the big barn,
Milk cows by hand twice a day,
Plow with oxen,
Shear, mow,
Pitch on, stow away,
Work taxes out by building roads,
And keep at it for fifty years,
The very least I should do
Is keep the stone walls in clear view.*

That poem reminds me that the work we do here is part of a long continuum. We inherit responsibilities from those who came before us: farmers, teachers, state workers, foresters, fishermen, and community members who built and sustained the foundations of this state. Our task is to honor those obligations with steadiness and care.

My name is Senator Stacy Brenner, and I represent District 30, including all of Gorham and much of Scarborough. I’m here to testify in strong support of the sponsor’s amendment to LD 1312, *An Act to Provide a Source of Revenue for School Construction and for the Land for Maine’s Future Trust Fund*.

In the spirit of transparency, I also serve as the President and CEO of Maine Farmland Trust. My career has centered on land access, farmland protection, and the viability of Maine’s agricultural communities—work that brings me into close relationship with the Land for Maine’s Future

Program, the funding challenges faced by rural and suburban schools, and the needs of Maine retirees.

Why LD 1312 Matters

The amendment to LD 1312 follows a fiscally responsible principle: when the Budget Stabilization Fund is already full—at its statutory 18% cap—its investment earnings should be put to work for Maine people.

The amendment directs those earnings to three essential commitments:

- 50% to the Major Capital School Construction Fund
- 25% to the Land for Maine's Future Trust Fund
- 25% to the Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust Fund for state retirees

These are long-term obligations we cannot ignore.

1. School Construction: A Pressing and Growing Need

In Scarborough, we have experienced firsthand the difficulty of funding new schools amid rapid residential growth. As more families move in and more housing is built, our enrollment pressures mount. Multiple school construction referendums have been brought forward—and despite broad recognition of the need, they have struggled because the property tax burden is heavy.

Communities like mine *want* to meet their responsibility to students. But they cannot shoulder the load alone. We have failing school infrastructure from Kittery to Fort Kent. The need is ubiquitous.

Directing investment earnings toward school construction offers relief to municipalities and ensures fairer distribution of the cost of safe, modern educational facilities. This support is essential if we expect school districts across Maine to keep up with the accelerating demand created by new housing and population shifts.

2. Land for Maine's Future: A Proven, Bipartisan Success

I am, in many ways, a product of the Land for Maine's Future program. When my husband and I came to Maine in 2001 with the dream of farming, we had student debt and no land. Because Scarborough Land Trust had conserved 434 acres using LMF funds, we were able to build Broadturn Farm on land that might otherwise have become a subdivision of 174 homes.

That single conservation investment created:

- a working farm
- year-round and seasonal jobs
- over \$500,000 in payroll, income, and sales tax contributions
- recreation access
- wildlife habitat
- and community stability

This is what working lands can do when they remain working.

LD 1312 is supported by a decades-long partnership between sportsmen and women, land trusts, and conservation organizations. Together, they have championed bipartisan investments—most recently, \$40 million over four years for LMF and the legislation that created the LMF Trust Fund.

LMF's recent record speaks for itself:

- Expanding public access on 80,000+ acres
- Protecting 29,000+ acres of working forests
- Conserving 9,000+ acres of deer wintering habitat
- Protecting productive farms, working waterfronts, and recreational access points statewide

And over its nearly 40-year history, LMF has:

- Conserved 650,000 acres of natural and recreational lands
- Supported 43 farms, 31 working waterfronts, and 75 water-access sites
- Protected 365,000 acres of privately owned working forests
- Secured 158 miles of multi-use trails

Maine people continue to rely on LMF as a tool for sustaining natural-resource economies—fishing, farming, forestry, hunting, recreation, and tourism—and for ensuring public access for Mainers of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

3. Supporting State Retirees: Keeping Our Promises

Finally, the amendment directs 25% of investment earnings to the OPEB trust fund for state employees.

Retirees have been clear: COLAs have not kept pace with inflation, and many are struggling. As a legislature, we cannot ignore those voices. Increasing the OPEB trust fund is a responsible and meaningful step toward protecting benefits, reducing unfunded liability, and strengthening long-term fiscal stability. This is not generosity—it is a commitment kept.

This amendment:

- does not draw down the Rainy Day Fund
- does not raise taxes
- and does not create new programs

It simply directs excess investment earnings to the long-term commitments that define strong, stable Maine communities:

- safe schools
- conserved working lands and public access
- and dignity for the people who served our state

This is what it looks like to “keep the stone walls in clear view.”

For all these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to support the sponsor’s amendment to LD 1312.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stacy Brenner".

Senator Stacy Brenner