



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Committee On Education and Cultural Affairs
From: Nathan Davis, Sierra Club Maine
Date: January 26, 2023
Re: **Testimony in Support of LD 142: An Act to Fund Climate-related Service Work**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Committee On Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Nathan Davis, and I am testifying on behalf of Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nation-wide as we work towards combating climate change and promoting a just and sustainable economy. To that end, we urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 142: An Act to Fund Climate-related Service Work.

When I served on the Energy Advisory Committee of the City of Rockland from 2016 through 2019, we planned and executed a residential weatherization program called Weatherize Rockland. We knocked on doors, distributed literature, negotiated group purchases, and generally did what we could to weatherize leaky old homes, especially those belonging to low-income homeowners. The program was a success and resulted in a net reduction of around 7,900 gallons of oil consumption in Rockland per year, most of this reduction leading directly to cost savings for low-income households. Efficiency Maine awarded its annual Hastings Award to Rockland in part because of this program. But it had a significant flaw: We didn't have the volunteer labor or staff capacity to sustain it beyond a single season.

Indeed, most municipalities and community organizations don't have the volunteer or staff resources to execute and sustain the vital work of connecting with property owners and tenants to improve the comfort and environmental and economic efficiency of their properties. This work is one of the most effective ways we can reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, save money, and improve our quality of life. LD 142 will dramatically increase our state's capacity to do all of these things by establishing ongoing funding for a total of 54 service and leadership positions in the Maine Climate Corps. These positions will complement and enhance not only weatherization projects throughout the state, but also efforts to improve the efficiency, equity, and efficacy of our transportation and public health systems, land and fresh water preservation, community resilience projects, and climate-related education. The net effect is likely to be cost savings and improved quality of life for the State of Maine and its citizens, as public buildings and people relying on public assistance of one form or another will use less energy and produce less pollution year after year. Therefore we hope that when the net cost of the bill is calculated, any fiscal note will be small, or in fact a positive one showing the net savings over time.

In addition to the statewide impact, we are enthusiastic about the impact that the Maine Climate Corps will have on the people who serve in it. Volunteers will acquire experience invaluable to establishing careers in climate and energy work while receiving a livable wage and benefits. Further, the Corps will ensure that its volunteers represent the economic and demographic diversity of the communities in which they serve. That trained workforce will also add to state and local revenue for years to come, making this potentially a net revenue producer for the State.

We urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 142. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Nathan Davis
Sierra Club Maine
Legislative Team member