

Bill Pedersen
Portland
LD 142

To: Sen. Joseph Rafferty, Representative Michael Brennan, and Members of the Committee
On Education and Cultural Affairs From: Bill Pedersen, Portland, ME

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Bill Pedersen, and I live in Portland, Maine. I am an avid outdoorsman who works in renewable energy development and finance. Additionally, I am an AmeriCorps - Energy Corps alumni. I spent my first two years out of college as a service member, helping vulnerable communities in Pennsylvania and Montana save money and reduce their environmental impacts by decreasing their energy consumption. I am writing to testify in support of LD 142.

Climate Corps is an opportunity for Maine to reduce energy expenses and increase energy security. The program could help Maine residents, particularly in rural energy-vulnerable communities, save money by reducing energy consumption. Decreased energy load will also enhance the efficiency of Maine's energy system and improve energy security. Stabilizing energy costs is vital as families across the state struggle to manage the financial repercussions of disruptions to the global energy system. Broad adoption of energy efficiency measures will reduce costs today and make Maine less exposed to future fluctuations in global commodity prices. Reducing energy consumption is also critical to achieving Maine's ambitious climate goals in a cost-effective manner.

A fully funded and implemented Climate Corps program will also attract young people to Maine and create pathways to careers in the climate sector. As someone who moved to Pennsylvania and Montana in my early twenties to participate in Energy Corps, I am confident that there are many young people who would be willing to move to Maine to be part of the Climate Corps. While I moved back east after the conclusion of my service term, many of my fellow service members stayed in Montana. At a time when Maine boasts the oldest population in the nation, Climate Corps can help draw young people to the state, particularly to the rural communities they will serve. My two Energy Corps years and the skills I gained directly contributed to my current job in the renewables industry. Numerous young people want to engage in the climate movement. Climate Corps can attract them to Maine and give them the experience to build a meaningful career.

Climate Corp's impacts will extend beyond the service members' term of service. Participating in civilian service models encourages a lifetime of civic engagement and community service. In my experience, it also encourages a notion of shared purpose among service members, many of whom came from different backgrounds and had different political persuasions. At a time when our country and state are very divided, civilian service programs can play a small role in building the sort of civically-engaged citizens the State of Maine wants.

The civilian service model has a long and well-documented history of helping America overcome significant obstacles. It is time for Maine to take advantage of Climate Corp's many benefits. The program can help Maine 1) reduce energy costs, improve energy security, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, 2) attract young people to the state and provide an avenue for building a career in climate, and 3) help to cultivate civically engaged citizens.

Thank you for reading my testimony.