

**TESTIMONY for the Maine Emergency Management Agency, Department of
Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management**

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL
RESOURCES**

LD 1488 – *“Resolve, To Study and Recommend Improvements to Maine's Dam Safety”*

Position – Neither For Nor Against

May 3, 2021

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and distinguished members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources – my name is Joe Legee and I’m the Deputy Director for the Maine Emergency Management Agency. I’m here today to provide testimony, neither for nor against LD 1488 “Resolve, To Study and Recommend Improvements to Maine’s Dam Safety”.

Maine’s Dam Safety Program, a program which resides at MEMA, is tasked by [statute](#) with inspecting existing dams and reservoirs to determine their hazard potential, as well as reviewing the design and construction of new and reconstructed dams. Additionally, the Program is responsible for assisting dam owners in the development of Emergency Action Plans (EAP’s) in order to minimize the impact of dam failure on people and property.

The Program is funded through both State General Fund and federal grant programs. The principal federal grant is the National Dam Safety Program (NDSP), which is administered by FEMA. The Program currently has three full time staff, two inspectors and one administrator. These staff are responsible for around 600 dams, which stretch across all four corners of the state.

Though the Program is currently meeting its responsibilities under statute, they maintain a rigorous travel and inspection schedule, which fully occupies the time of both existing inspectors. While the study outlined in the bill could produce valuable information, time spent completing the study would result in fewer dams inspected.

Beyond the opportunity cost of the study, the Program’s budget is fully exhausted in the performance of its current responsibilities. Based on our research, the peer review from Association of State Dam Safety Officials alone will cost between \$10,000-\$15,000.

Given the current responsibilities under statute – the program does not have the resources to execute the study as outlined in this bill.

This concludes my testimony. I stand ready answer any questions you have and to participate in any work sessions that follow this hearing. Thank you.