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DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



MELANIE LOYZIM
COMMISSIONER

TESTIMONY OF
MELANIE LOYZIM, COMMISSIONER
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF
L.D. 1572 “RESOLVE, TO ANALYZE THE IMPACT OF SEA LEVEL RISE”
SPONSORED BY REP. BLUME
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

HEARING DATE:

MAY 7, 2021

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, I am Melanie Loyzim, Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), providing this testimony in support of L.D. 1572.

This Resolve would express the Legislature’s support for use of the best available science to prepare for the probable effects of climate change on infrastructure, property and land use. 2019 Public Law, Chapter 476 created the Science and Technical Subcommittee of the Maine Climate Council and charged the subcommittee with establishing science-based sea level rise projections for the State's coastal areas. The subcommittee delivered those projections to the Maine Climate Council in 2020, with the recommendation that Maine should manage for the highly probable scenario of 1.5 feet mean sea level rise by 2050 and 3.9 feet by 2100. The

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Council unanimously accepted this recommendation for inclusion in Maine’s 2020 Climate Plan “Maine Won’t Wait”, along with “Strategy F” to Build Healthy and Resilient Communities.

Within Strategy F, the Council recommended developing and implementing updated land-use regulations, laws, and practices by 2024 in order to enhance community resilience to flooding and other climate impacts. The Community Resilience Planning, Public Health, and Emergency Management Working Group evaluated existing state rules and has already provided an initial list of those that should be updated. Agencies do not need additional legislative authorization for this work, but this Resolve ensures that any statutory roadblocks to preparing for sea level rise in those updates to regulations and practices will be appropriately brought to the Legislature to address.

This bill does not answer the question of where and how predicted sea level rise will be incorporated into rules and laws; it answers the question of how much. Many agencies in state government manage and protect resources that are impacted by sea level rise, and each has their own system of rules, policies, guidance and practices. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to including sea level rise predictions into those systems. Each agency will need to tackle specific legal and technical questions, and to work with stakeholders who have interest and expertise in those specific areas. How much sea level rise we must be prepared for should no longer be an area for debate during that work. This Resolve puts that question to rest and supports thoughtful forward progress.