



Town of Jay

340 Main St • Jay, Maine 04239-1697
Tel: 207-897-6785
Fax: 207-897-9420

Office of

Select Board
Assessors
Town Manager
Treasurer
Town Clerk
Planning Board
Code Administrator

Testimony in Support of LD 1 ***An Act to Increase Storm Preparedness for Maine's Communities,*** ***Homes and Infrastructure***

Good afternoon, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Committee On Housing and Economic Development.

My name is Shiloh LaFreniere, and I am the Town Manager of Jay as well as a member of the Governor's Commission on Infrastructure Rebuilding and Resilience. Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony with you in support of LD 1. I'm providing this testimony from the perspective of both my positions. As many of you may know, the Town of Jay was hit with 3 federally declared storms in 2023. We experienced nearly \$4 million in damages to our roads and infrastructure. I can't begin to tell you the devastation that it caused or begin to express the amount of work that it put on our municipal staff as we worked through recovery efforts. And although the worst storm was in June of 2023, we are still working through the FEMA process to recoup the funds from our largest project of \$1.6 million. I have been the Town Manager in Jay for 10 years and I can say that these FEMA disasters were among the most stressful periods of my tenure, which says a lot given that we've seen a paper mill explosion and ultimately the closure of 2 mills in Jay.

I am proud that the State has recognized the impact that these disasters have on our communities and our residents and that we are stepping up, both through the work of the Commission and other State working groups but also here in the Legislature, to try to bring about meaningful changes that will provide much needed support.

So many of our municipalities are not equipped to deal with these disasters both in manpower capacity and in fiscal capacity. The proposal in LD 1 to provide funding of the State's Disaster Recovery Fund to reduce the local cost share for FEMA recovery dollars is huge. Many of our municipalities are faced with taking loans to cover these disasters. The cost of which impacts all our residents. In the midst of dealing with these disasters, knowing that the State is their in support is huge.

This legislation also proposes funding to improve access to flood data and maps and builds regional capacity to assist our communities. Again, so many of our smaller municipalities do not have the capacity to build resilience related to flooding, either in our public infrastructure or that of our residents. Providing this added support is essential to our communities being able to build resiliency for the future into our local planning and preparedness.

The other aspects of LD 1 also further the goals of the Commission as well as the communities that have been impacted by these devastating storms and I encourage you to support this bill and provide the much needed support that our communities need.