



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

Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development
Room 208, Cross State Office Building
Thursday, February 27, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development. My name is Rebecca Boulos. I am a resident of South Portland and executive director of Maine Public Health Association. MPHA supports LD 1: "An Act to Increase Storm Preparedness for Maine's Communities, Homes and Infrastructure."

MPHA is the state's oldest, largest, and most diverse association for public health professionals. We represent more than 850 individual members and 70 organizations across the state. The mission of MPHA is to advance the health of all people and places in Maine. As a statewide nonprofit association, we advocate, act, and advise on critical public health challenges. We are not tied to a national agenda, which means we are responsive to the needs of Maine's communities, and we take that responsibility seriously.

LD 1 includes three major provisions. It: 1) Establishes a Home Resiliency Program, 2) Improves hazard mitigation resources and statewide communications, and 3) Creates the State Resilience Office and the Flood-Ready Maine Program.

MPHA serves as co-lead of the Maine Climate Council's Community Resilience Working Group. It was clear in our working group discussions that people in Maine need help making their homes more resistant to increasingly frequent extreme weather events. Homes with poor flashing around windows and doors or old roofs in need of replacement are easy targets for water damage and mold growth. The Home Resiliency Program would provide the necessary funding to help protect these homes, so they don't fall into disrepair and contribute to the housing crisis our state is facing; or force tenants to live in unsafe and unhealthy dwellings.

We also heard in our working group discussions about the challenges that smaller communities, and under-resourced community members, experience in accessing government funding. We encourage the committee to consider how to make accessing these funds as easy as possible, within reason, for the people who most need them.

We especially support the provision in LD 1 to establish standards for project completion, including contractor approval. Part of the reason that existing homes need this investment is because of original poor construction; ideally we would avoid that same situation with this much-needed infusion of funds.

In our working group discussions, we also heard about the need for improved communications between state, regional and local entities – this was especially evident during the back-to-back storms last winter when there was confusion about available resources and how to access them. At MPHA, we responded to this by preparing fact sheets on changing climate implications for health – like tick-borne disease, air quality, and extreme

weather events – and available resources and/or prevention strategies. We also designed a template page for municipalities to incorporate on their websites to help residents more easily navigate information and resources when a natural disaster occurs. But that’s only part of the solution – supporting communication infrastructure for MEMA is essential for strengthening timely statewide collaboration and cooperation.

The establishment of the State Resilience Office and Flood-Ready program will help people in Maine adapt and make their homes and communities more resilient by providing state-level resources and information that can help prevent damage, save money, and improve health.

The fact is, we’re living in a changed world; one where extreme weather events, flooding, and other natural disasters are more common in Maine. If we adapt and face this new reality, our communities can still thrive. The proposals outlined in LD 1 are promising and worthwhile investments for Maine. We strongly support this legislation and respectfully request you vote LD 1 “Ought to Pass.” Thank you for your consideration.