



MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1440

TTY: (207) 287-4469

February 27, 2025 - Testimony in support of LD 1:

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 Representative Billy Bob Faulkingham and I serve as the House Republican Leader. I represent House District 12, which includes the towns of Franklin, Gouldsboro, Hancock, Sorrento, Sullivan, Winter Harbor, and Steuben.

I am pleased to co-sponsor LD 1: ***An Act to Increase Storm Preparedness for Maine's Communities, Homes, and Infrastructure.***

Washington and Hancock Counties have been hard hit by heavy rains and coastal storms over the past five years. On June 9th, 2021, more than 5 inches of rain fell in the early morning hours. Residents woke up to flash flooding and washed-out culverts in Winter Harbor and Gouldsboro, including Route 186 in Birch Harbor. The same downpour caused more road washouts in Machias and Roque Bluffs, completely cutting off vehicle access to homes and families.

Last January, the two coastal storms that struck our communities tore up roads, damaged fishing wharves, and left fishermen and families wondering how to rebuild. The Hutchinson family's wharf in Steuben was completely washed away, as was Chipman's wharf in Milbridge that served 32 fishing boats. Without these wharves, fishermen were not able to get bait or fuel for their boats. When the causeway in Gouldsboro washed out, it left the Corea Lobster Co-op unable to transport product off their site.

LD 1 won't stop storms like this in the future, but it will help towns, businesses, and homeowners in our communities to be better prepared. The Home Resiliency Program will encourage homeowners to better protect their property and families. Strengthening the roof on a house or making a basement watertight means less damage and less financial stress after a natural disaster. These improvements might even lower insurance premiums for homeowners too.

Reliable communications during an emergency are critical. LD 1 invests in updating communications systems and training at the Maine Emergency Management Agency, so that our first responders know what weather is coming and can receive timely information during an emergency.

When our towns needed to repair these washed-out roads, FEMA required a local match of 25% of the project cost. MEMA's Disaster Recovery Fund provides 15% of the needed match, helping small towns afford the repairs and limiting the burden on property taxpayers. MEMA can only provide this match if the Disaster Recovery Fund has money in it. LD 1 will make a one-time transfer of \$10 million to the Disaster Recovery Fund so that it can keep helping towns make the repairs they need.

Furthermore, towns need more accurate information about flooding. LD 1 will invest in better flood maps for communities so that they can put their own resources towards planning for stronger and safer local infrastructure.

This bill is good for people and communities in Maine. It does not rely on the General Fund. It does not raise taxes. And it will make families and businesses safer when the next rainstorm or coastal storm comes.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Billy Bob Faulkingham". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Respectfully,".

Rep. Billy Bob Faulkingham
House Republican Leader