

Jill Saxby  
Maine Council of Churches  
LD 1138

My name is Rev. Jill Saxby. I live in Cape Elizabeth and serve on the Maine Council of Churches Public Policy Committee. The Council has been a member of the Environmental Priorities Coalition for over 20 years. LD 1138 is one of the EPC's priority bills in this session of the Maine Legislature.

We urge you to support this bill both because it will help Maine meet our Climate Action Plan goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and pollution and because greater access to clean public transportation will benefit our communities in other ways, as well. Better access to affordable, accessible, clean public transportation, walkable downtowns and more transportation options will promote the economic well-being, health and welfare of all Mainers, but especially Mainers who are older, younger, living in rural areas, and living with low-income, or with disabilities that make driving personal vehicles difficult or impossible.

The Council's Public Policy "Moral Agenda" states that we support sustainable use of Maine's natural resources, while working to reverse the effects of climate change. As people of faith, we look to the ancient wisdom of scriptures such as Psalm 24 -- "the Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it." We believe this means we are all called to a responsibility to use the natural resources entrusted to us, including our energy resources, in ways that benefit all our neighbors, especially the most vulnerable.

We know that fossil-fueled transportation, including personal private vehicles, are responsible for nearly 50% of current emissions. We know this has to change and that the time horizon for effective response is shortening. We believe LD 1138 is a common sense and smart way to move us toward these goals, to be responsible stewards and to carry out our moral obligation to love our neighbors as ourselves -- including the "neighborhood" itself -- the environment, and the climate, we all share.

Many Mainers who are members of faith communities are aware of and concerned about the legacy of climate change that is being left to younger generations. Churches are convening "Green Teams" to learn how we are called to do ministry in a climate-changed world and to meet our moral responsibility to respond to the climate crisis. More and more, people of faith are understanding climate change is not only an environmental but an economic justice issue. So often the negative impacts of pollution and climate change affect the most vulnerable of our neighbors "first and worst."

We also know that tax dollars are limited. We believe that it simply makes more sense to do everything we can now to see them spent on responsible planning for climate-smart transportation, not only for ourselves, but to ensure a better future for the next generations.

We believe LD 1138 represents an opportunity to take a big step in the right direction, on the road to a smarter, cleaner transportation system in Maine by connecting our transportation planning and projects to our climate action goals. We urge you to vote Ought to Pass and thank you for considering our viewpoint on this matter.