



Testimony in Support of LD 1
An Act to Increase Storm Preparedness
for Maine's Communities, Homes and Infrastructure
Sarah Nichols, on behalf of NRCM, February 11, 2025

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and distinguished members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development. My name is Sarah Nichols, and I'm testifying in support of LD 1 on behalf of the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) because it takes a critical step toward strengthening Maine's emergency response and preparedness in the face of increasing extreme weather events.

While the damage from the recent storms in Maine has been dangerous and costly, it has also brought much-needed attention to the weaknesses in our current emergency and preparedness systems, and our vulnerability to the escalating impacts of climate change. The State recognized this and took the right approach in creating the Infrastructure Rebuilding and Resilience Commission to take this issue head on. If implemented, this bill would implement some key recommendations from that Commission and ensure that Maine is better prepared for future disasters by investing in home resiliency grants, improved emergency communications, updated flood maps, and stronger disaster recovery programs—complete with dedicated staff positions and a new State Resilience Office to carry out these tasks. These measures won't solve every problem but it's a great start that will help homeowners and communities recover faster, reduce risks, and save lives.

However, this bill also highlights a bigger question: How can we move beyond just responding to disasters and instead reduce their impact in the first place? True resilience means not only preparing for storms but also preventing damage before it happens. We must be thoughtful about where and how we develop housing and infrastructure, ensuring new projects are built in safer, less-flood-prone areas. We need strong building codes that promote homes designed to withstand extreme weather and land-use policies that prevent development from worsening flood risks.

We also cannot ignore the broader reality that the way we live and build on this planet influences the frequency and intensity of these disasters. Making smarter choices—like investing in clean energy and energy efficiency, protecting natural landscapes, and designing communities to be more resilient—not only strengthens Maine's ability to withstand extreme weather but also creates healthier, more sustainable places to live. This is the future for Maine that we can build together. By prioritizing these efforts, we can reduce the risk that storms like these could become even stronger and more frequent in the years ahead. It's a positive feedback loop.

This bill is a strong foundation, but as a state we are still at the beginning—not the end—of our efforts to build a safer, more resilient Maine. I urge you to support this legislation and to consider supporting additional proactive policies in tandem with LD 1 to ensure we are not only prepared for disasters but actively reducing our future risks. Thank you.