

Good evening, members of the committee. My name is Emma Pautz and I live in Barrington and I am a junior at Barrington High School. I am here to support H7022 Act on Coasts.

Often, when we think of the climate crisis, our focus is on the present. We prioritize immediate actions like transitioning to renewable energy, improving public transportation, and reducing waste. While these actions are crucial, we often overlook the more distant future. This is a mindset that has contributed to our current predicament. I support the Act on Coasts because it provides essential provisions to address the effects of climate change on our coasts.

The reality is that, even if we were to meet all our targets, climate change will not suddenly cease to be an issue. According to MIT's *Climate Portal*, "Temperatures will likely stop rising in a few years or decades—but it could take centuries for them to fall to the levels humans enjoyed before we started burning fossil fuels." As a result, Rhode Island will continue to experience flooding, erosion, and extreme weather for centuries to come.

Speaking here today, I represent the thousands of young Rhode Islanders who will be experiencing a very different Rhode Island during our lifetimes. A report on Rhode Island by NOAA states that "[the sea] is projected to rise another 1 to 4 feet by 2100 [and] increases in sea level will likely increase coastal flooding and erosion during winter storms and hurricanes."

As we begin to experience the consequences of climate change, we often ask ourselves why action wasn't taken decades ago. Similarly, future Rhode Islanders may question why we failed to do more in the 2020s. We must do better than previous generations. We must be proactive in our policies. We must ensure resilient coastlines. We must pass the Act on Coasts.

In conclusion, I urge you not only to pass this act but also to fulfill its promises with determination. As we have learned from past experience, half-hearted efforts to combat climate change are not enough. The lives of future Rhode Islanders are at stake. Thank you.

<https://climate.mit.edu/ask-mit/how-long-will-it-take-temperatures-stop-rising-or-return-normal-if-we-stop-emitting>
<https://climatechange.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkqbur481/files/documents/noaa-climate-rhode-island-state-summary.pdf>