

**TESTIMONY OF  
Deirdre Gilbert,  
Director of State Marine Policy**

**The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) is testifying  
in Opposition to**

**L.D. 491 An Act To Lower from 70 to 65 the Age at Which a Person May  
Obtain a Lobster and Crab Fishing License for a Reduced Fee**

**Before the Committee on Marine Resources  
Sponsored by Representative Gillway  
Date of Hearing: March 18, 2015**

Senator Baker, Representative Kumiega, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources, my name is Deirdre Gilbert, Director of State Marine Policy for the Department of Marine Resources, and I am testifying on behalf of the Department in opposition to LD 491.

Under current law, individuals over the age of 70 qualify for a 50% reduction in the cost of their commercial lobster license, as follows:

---

	Under 70	70+
Class I	\$135.75	\$66.00
Class II	\$272.50	\$136.00
Class III	\$407.25	\$203.00

They also pay 50% of the license surcharge for the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative.

This bill proposes to lower the age at which someone would qualify for that price reduction to 65 years. Our opposition to this bill is based on that fact that these licenses are issued and held for the purpose of pursuing a commercial activity, for which each license holder is eligible for the same opportunity. The cost of the license contributes to the management and enforcement needs of the fishery, which support the fishery's long term viability for all license holders.

We view this proposal differently than Rep. Tuell's bill from earlier this session, which proposed reduction of the license fee for shellfish harvesters under the age of 18. In that situation, the landings data showed that, as a result of their age, individuals under the age of 18 had more limited opportunity to use that license (mostly when school is out of session), and their landings were significantly smaller than those of individuals over the age of 18 relying on the license for their livelihood. We had also understood that part of the purpose of Rep Tuell's bill was to encourage young people who wanted to work, by removing one of the barriers to them entering the clam fishery.

In contrast, as a lobster license holder ages, and perhaps curtails their activity in the fishery, they can reduce the costs associated with participation by purchasing fewer trap tags, or dropping down to a lower class of license. If it is no longer profitable for them to participate in the fishery at any level, it is perhaps more appropriate for them to relinquish the license, rather than be afforded the opportunity to keep it at reduced cost. As you are aware from the many meetings held with the lobster industry over the past several years, a major concern in the fishery is the amount of "latent effort" – licenses held, but

not used. At this time, it would not be useful to further enable individuals who are latent to retain their license through a reduced fee.

In a 2012 report by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute on limited entry and latent effort in the fishery utilizing an industry survey, there were a number of questions that addressed activity level of fishermen at various age ranges. While the ranges were from 60 to 70 and then 70+, therefore making it difficult to break out the 65-70 age group, it is worth noting that the variation from those who indicated they were employed as fishermen full time, and planned to go lobstering full time were not significantly different between ages 50-60 and 60-70, but dropped off significantly after the age of 70.

In closing, please be aware that, there will be a fiscal note representing the reduction in general fund contribution by those license holders between the ages of 65 and 70. For 2014, there were 381 individuals who would have qualified for this reduction in license fee, representing ~\$49,000 in lost revenue to the General Fund.

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

---