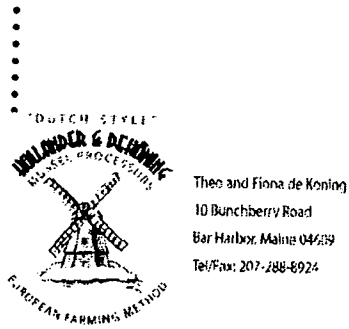


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May 1, 2017

The Honorable Joyce A. Maker, Senate Chair  
The Honorable Walter A. Kumiega III, House Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources  
Cross Building, Room 206  
Augusta, ME. 04333

Senator Maker, Representative Kumiega, Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources:

My name is Fiona de Koning and with my husband Theo de Koning, we own and operate Acadia Aqua Farms, a mussel aquaculture business based in Trenton, ME. We have currently the largest acreage for shellfish lease holder in the State, now leasing 157 acres. We started the farm around 10 years ago and have grown the production and the number of people we employ year round, steadily over this time. We are a generational business with our son having chosen to stay in the State and work in the company after graduating from the University of Maine with an engineering degree. The younger son plans to join full time when he graduates.

I stand before you today to testify in strong support of LD 1438, "An Act to Improve the Aquaculture Leasing and Licensing Laws". Our background is as mussel farmers from The Netherlands which has a large mussel aquaculture industry and is highly regulated and profitable. The potential for the growth of aquaculture as a sustainable and year round sector in Maine cannot be overestimated. As the US market for seafood continues to grow and the demands for sustainable, responsibly raised and domestically produced food increases alongside that, there is a unique opportunity to develop a world class aquaculture sector on the coast of Maine where many coastal communities are seeing their working waterfront decline. The current lease application system at present does rather inhibit development of aquaculture businesses and from our perspective could be improved by a few steps as outlined by the testimony presented by Sebastian Belle on behalf of the Maine Aquaculture Association. Aquaculture always requires long term planning by its very nature and therefore long term financial arrangements. Banks need security in order to make loans and the State can help us grow as a sector by making these changes to the leasing system.

I strongly support the testimony presented to you by Sebastian Belle and urge you to vote "ought to pass as amended" on LD 1438.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to those who live on the coast of Maine and earn a living from marine resource based operations.

Sincerely, Fiona de Koning, Acadia Aqua Farms LLC

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