



**Written Testimony by William Norbert
Governmental Affairs and Communications Manager**

Neither For Nor Against L.D. 586

***An Act to Protect Maine Fisheries from the Effects of
Industrial Recirculating Aquaculture Operations***

March 16, 2023

Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources

Senator Reny, Representative Hepler, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources:

My name is Bill Norbert. I am the Governmental Affairs and Communications Manager at the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME). I live in Brunswick and am submitting this written testimony Neither for Nor Against L.D. 586, *An Act to Protect Maine Fisheries from the Effects of Industrial Aquaculture Operations*.

FAME is a quasi-independent state agency that provides financial solutions that help Maine people achieve their business and higher education goals. We create business and educational opportunities through our willingness to invest at greater risk based on public benefit. FAME's mission is to provide financial solutions that help Maine people achieve their business and higher educational goals. Our vision is to help create a Maine workforce with good paying jobs by focusing on the nexus of economic and educational development.

This bill directs the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) to ensure that new industrial recirculating aquaculture operations (RAS facilities) do not contribute to the degradation of water quality or air quality or increase the state's overall carbon emissions and that aquaculture feed sources do not include certain wild marine organisms, pollutants, and contaminants. The Department also would have to ensure that industrial recirculating aquaculture operations do not adversely impact native lobster, shellfish, seaweed, or finfish operations.

FAME administers various business finance programs such as loan guarantees, direct loans, bonds, and tax credits to support business financing. Much of our work helps to support Maine's natural marine resources industries, whether it be lobster and other fishing boats and gear, mussel and oyster farming, bait companies, wharves, and supply

companies. Supporting aquaculture projects is part of Maine's ten-year strategic economic development plan and a priority for FAME.

Some of the aquaculture-related companies we support include Kingfish Maine, Inc. (yellowtail kingfish farm based in Franklin); American Unagi, LLC (eel farm based in Waldoboro), and Springworks Farm, LLC (aquaponic lettuce farm in Lisbon). Our understanding from working with these companies is that Maine already has in place strict environmental requirements for such facilities, which balance the need for a clean, safe environment with the needs of the industry and economic development. As you know, under existing state law, land-based aquaculture facilities require both a license from DMR and permits from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). FAME requires that such licenses and approvals be in order prior to approving such project financing.

We are keenly aware and supportive of the great interest in aquaculture and the need to protect our water quality and environment; however, we are concerned that this bill as written so broadly could potentially have unintentional, detrimental effects on the growth and success of this business sector and Maine's stated strategic goal of embracing aquaculture as a valued sector of our economy. Some of the proposed requirements of the bill such as adopting regulations pertaining to water and air quality seem duplicative to the work being done already by DMR, DEP, and other agencies. Other requirements, such as whether a proposed project would increase overall carbon emissions, seem costly and difficult to evaluate, as well. We urge you to pause in careful consideration as you analyze the proposal to consider whether what it proposes is duplicative, unnecessary, onerous, or targets unfairly land-based aquaculture projects.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony. We can be available for the work session if helpful, as well.