

Sheila Dassatt
Downeast Lobstermen's Association
LD 710

Dear Marine Resource Committee,

As a member of the Maine Lobster Industry, we are all facing a lot of challenges this year, as well as the past few years. I am writing this testimony, speaking with the fact that in a large association, we are bound to not all agree or agree to disagree with the issues that we are facing. This is our overall consensus about this particular LD 710 bill. This testimony speaks "not in favor" of the terms of this bill.

We understand what our representative is trying to help with, but there must be other avenues for the funding. I have worked with the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative since it was the Maine Lobster Promotion Council. I must say that we have spent a lot of time in the recent past, working in a subcommittee to help improve the MLPC and support its efforts and funding.

We put a lot of time in working with John Suave or better known as the Blueberry Guy. This was also working with David Cousins, Annie Tselikis, myself, and more. This was all in an effort to learn more about promotion and to establish more funding to promote our premium product, Maine Lobster.

At that point in time, we were funded through our lobster licenses, but the marketing fund amount was much lower than the standard amount that was needed to promote effectively. The Council was re-structured in 2013 and became the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative and is doing a very good job. Last year funds were diverted from the MLMC to this Legal Fund. Last year fishermen saw record low prices due to negative propaganda about Maine lobster. Our Marketing Collaborative being short funded was unable to launch a strong promotion to offset the negative publicity. Taking money from the Council to contribute to legal funds (which I'm sure we need legal representation) to two specific associations that are not state established is not necessarily the best answer. There are several associations in this state that are working for the same cause and purpose. Perhaps the state should have its own established Legal Fund. Another suggestion: if the associations need funding, we also have the R.E.D. Board that would need RFP's for funding, but there are other sources and it all goes with the approval of the state.

Another question that needs to be answered is the legality of state funds being diverted to the private sector, even though going through the legislative process, something does not seem right to re-appropriate funds that are earmarked for a specific council and give that money to a non government entities. Yes, people will say that the lawsuit is more important than marketing lobsters, I feel that both issues are equally important. In the long run, I feel that the fishery will survive and we still need to market our product, lawsuit or no lawsuit. The last resolve giving us a several year reprieve on the whale regulations was accomplished by our state working with our Senators and Legislators in Washington, DC.

This is why they are there, to work for us.

Please consider this testimony respectfully on all parts of my statement, Thank you,
Sheila H. Dassatt

Executive Director
Downeast Lobstermen's Association