

Testimony of Sara Rademaker, Owner, American Unagi

Neither For Nor Against

L.D. 1286, Resolve, to Establish the Blue Economy Task Force to Support Maine's Emergence as a Center for Blue Economy Innovation and Opportunity in the 21st Century

Dear Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and Honorable Members of the IDEAB Committee:

My name is Sara Rademaker, owner of American Unagi in Waldoboro, Maine, a company that grows and sells locally sourced, responsibly raised eels. I appear to testify Neither For Nor Against LD 1286.

While I am here to testify on my own behalf, my views are shaped and informed by my role as Co-Chair of SEA Maine, an industry-led initiative bringing together leaders in Maine's commercial fishing, aquaculture, and seafood economy to build a long-term strategy for economic growth, market and workforce development, and greater resiliency in Maine's seafood economy. The effort is funded by the federal EDA with match funding from the Maine Technology Institute and FocusMaine. Our project manager is the Maine Development Foundation; some of you heard about our work from my co-chair Curt Brown on MDF's legislative bus tour. Our final product, a strategic economic development roadmap, should be complete by late fall. The coalition has gathered extensive data and is entering an exciting phase of weaving many elements into a comprehensive shared vision for our sector.

As an individual in Maine's seafood sector and as SEA Maine Co-Chair, I support the idea of greater coordination within Maine's seafood sector and with other marine sectors in order to advance the blue economy in our state. I appreciate the sponsors of LD 1286 for elevating discussion about the sector and its long-term future.

My primary concern – one I've heard echoed in recent days by many SEA Maine colleagues -- is with the overlapping timing and scope of this proposed task force with the SEA Maine roadmap work. I urge you to roll the bill into the second session to be refined. Waiting until the SEA Maine roadmap is complete allows the stakeholders, whose time as industry volunteers is already highly constrained, to complete their work without trying to show up in two parallel, duplicative processes over the next nine months. It also ensures that the SEA Maine roadmap itself can inform the structure and scope of the proposed task force to avoid duplication. I've attached a list of SEA Maine's leadership group and committee structure so you can see its ambitious scope and diverse participation.

We only just became aware of this bill last week. Rolling this bill over into the second regular session, with collaborative refinement by stakeholders this fall, creates some breathing room for SEA Maine to finish its work and for more robust conversations among stakeholders.

I and my colleagues on the SEA Maine project would be delighted to brief the IDEAB Committee and anyone else who would like to learn more about the coalition's work and its anticipated outcomes.

Thank you for your consideration.

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