

Gregory Foote
Cape Elizabeth
LD 508

Good Day, My name is Gregory Foote of Cape Elizabeth, Maine and am an active oyster and kelp farmer as well as the President of the Maine Family SeaFarm Cooperative in Freeport/Yarmouth, Maine. I am writing to oppose bill LD508 in its current form.

Aquaculture in Maine is a new and growing industry that can help support our other fisheries and provide jobs to young people in the State of Maine. We have already done 24 studies on aquaculture here in the state. Our DMR has been overhauled to properly vet lease applications and often screen out poor sites and applications before the application process is even complete. In my position as president of our aquaculture co-op, I get to travel to other parts of the country to learn from experts. Every state that I travel to talks about Maine's application and vetting process as the gold standard for aquaculture leasing and permitting programs.

This bill would instigate yet another study that would be redundant and a waste of taxpayer dollars. On top of that, it would also form a panel of 17 "stakeholders" and only TWO of the 17 would be representing the aquaculture industry. Imagine what lobstermen would say if there was a 17 person study group determining the future of lobstering and only 2 lobstermen were allowed to be on it. This bill is completely discriminatory and is designed to ensure the regulated community (aquaculture) is in the minority.

I support MAA and their efforts to find constructive solutions that address public concerns while allowing Maine aquaculture businesses to grow. We don't need additional regulations, we need a reasonable amount of staff at the DMR to execute the process that has already been established. Maine needs to build on its reputation of providing top quality seafood to the nation and world by following the process in place to site and regulate aquaculture operations as sustainably, responsibly and as quickly as possible to allow this industry to grow at a reasonable pace and for there to be continued measured investment.

Thank you for your time,

Gregory Foote

Lastly,