

Jennifer Robinson
Pembroke
LD 508

Members of the Environment and Natural Resource Committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you LD 508, “A Resolve, Directing the Department of Environmental Protection to Review its Environmental Permitting Laws”, which mandates that the Department of Environmental Protection form a study group to determine whether ocean based aquaculture should be regulated like land based aquaculture operations.

I am writing to you today to strongly ask you to vote Ought Not to pass. My name is Jennifer Robinson and I am the Compliance Officer for Cooke Aquaculture USA and a resident of Pembroke, Maine. I grew up in Parsonsfield (small town in southern Maine) and am a proud University of Maine at Machias alum which is how I ended up living in Downeast Maine.

Our company has operations in Franklin, Somerset, Hancock and Washington Counties and we employ over 200 people in those 4 Maine counties. I have been in the aquaculture industry since 1998 and have been employed by Cooke Aquaculture since 2005.

Over those 25 years of experience with the industry, I have seen and been involved with almost as many studies as my time in the industry. I am not against another study if it makes sense, however, to burden the State agencies with another study that is comparing two very different forms of aquaculture doesn't make sense to me. Like the saying goes, it's like comparing apples to oranges. Yes, they have some characteristics in common but overall are unique. Or maybe you like the saying “one size does NOT fit all”? Studies have shown that Maine is globally recognized for its stringent regulations on the industry. There's no coincidence that other jurisdictions look to our regulatory framework when forming or updating theirs.

The leasing and permitting process for a marine facility in the State of Maine is by far one of the most stringent with numerous regulators and stakeholders involved throughout the entire process. There are several conditions that are examined that are specific to our marine operations that may be lost in translation. Currently, navigation, fishing use, riparian owners ingress egress, existing system support, essential habitat, lighting, noise, visual impact are all considered for our marine facilities which some are specific to marine environments. Our current operations, whether marine or landbase, already have similar discharge requirements specific to the environment in which they discharge into. Monitoring the physical and ecological effects on the sediment, flora and fauna, as well as water quality, which ultimately achieve the same levels of protection relative to the environment.

I urge you to vote ought not to pass.

Thank you for your time,
Jennifer Robinson