



The Honorable Margaret Rotundo, Senate Chair
The Honorable Melanie Sachs, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
State House, Room 228
Augusta, ME. 04333

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, Honorable members of the Joint Committee on Marine Resources:

My name is Sebastian Belle and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Aquaculture Association (MAA). The MAA represents Maine's aquatic farmers and the many infrastructure companies that provide goods and services to our producers. Our farmers annually produce over 100 million dollars in farm gate revenue and directly employ roughly 700 Maine citizens year-round. We purchase goods and services from over 400 Maine businesses and our total economic impact is roughly 150 million dollars annually.

My apologies I am unable to appear before you in person today because we are co-hosting a three day conference on Seaweed aquaculture in Portland. I wish to present testimony in strong support of LD 1480, "An Act to Protect Union Wharf and Sustain Maine's Maritime Industries" Sponsored by Senator Stacy Brenner.

Maine's working waterfronts are under siege. Little by little our states commercial waterfronts are being bought up and converted to residential use. Although there have been lots of studies documenting the speed of the erosion of our working waterfront infrastructure the Gulf of Maine Research Institute under the thoughtful leadership of Don Perkins took action and stepped in to save Union Wharf from that fate. Union Wharf is one of the last commercial working waterfronts in Portland and is vital to the commercial fishing and aquaculture communities of southern Maine. Through creative financing and fundraising Don was able to quickly step in and prevent Union Wharfs conversion to non working waterfront use. He dd that at great risk and now needs help to make the acquisition financially viable. LD 1480 would help do that and support the preservation of regionally critical infrastructure.

Maine seafood is an iconic part of the Maine brand and Maine aquaculture products have earned their place as part of that brand. Please help us continue to build that brand and defend Maines working waterfronts. Vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1480. I thank you for your attention and patience and would be glad to answer any questions you may have.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "S. Belle", is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Sebastian M. Belle
Executive Director