



# Maine Lobstering Union

## Local 207



150 Bar Harbor Rd., Trenton, ME 04605

Good Afternoon Senator Perry, Representative Hepler,  
Honorable members of the committee,

My name is Virginia Olsen, I am a lobsterman from  
Stonington, Maine and Director of the Maine  
Lobstering Union.

We support LD 1552 “An Act to Create the Lobster  
Innovation Fund.”

First, I would like to thank Senator Vitelli for putting  
the bill forward. I have seen a plethora of funding for  
development of technology which is being gobbled up  
by companies that think they know how best to fix an  
issue without fishermen consultation. They are  
included in the testing phase and asked to give input  
on the design. That is too late in the process. We are  
problem solvers by nature- working on highly  
corrosive salt water- if we had to go back to port each  
time something went wrong or broke, we would never

get a chance to lobster! We are all engineers out of necessity. I would like to see this bill that puts funding in lobstermen's hands set a precedence on gear types designed in, or produced in, Maine, with lobstermen collaboration. We also need equal representation of all 7 zones as each one is different from the next.

Testing a bunch of gear in 10 fathoms of water would be vastly different than 50-100 fathoms where it will most likely be required first. If you split that up it would be \$142,857.00 per zone- just over \$35,000.00 for 4 fishermen- 2 federal and 2 state or 3 federal and 1 state. Either way, you should have geographical diversity, multiple types of gear, with varying price points. Some of today's pop-up gear would never work on a 19'-20' skiff. Finding out when and where this gear is needed is just as important as how it works. How we can adopt equipment we already use should be high on the wish list. I greatly appreciate this funding that goes directly to fishermen. It feels like we have an issue that everyone is trying to solve for us, not with us. This doesn't need to be about creating a new industry to allow us to fish, it needs to be a methodical approach to how we can best protect a majestic creature that spends very little time in our

fishing grounds. How do we best protect the right whale and the lobstermen? We are still trying to figure that out. As I said before, knowing where to use this technology and when are two questions we MUST answer before this pause comes to an end.

Thank you for your time today. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully,

Virginia Olsen

Director Maine Lobstering Union