



Testimony of the Island Institute In Support of LD 2162, An Act Regarding the Homestead Property Tax Exemption and the Property Value Reassessment Process

February 7, 2024

Senator Grohoski, Representative Perry, Members of the Committee on Taxation. My name is Nick Battista, and I am testifying on behalf of the Island Institute in partial support of the ideas motivating the parts of LD 2162 that address working waterfront land.

The Island Institute is a 40-year-old nonprofit organization based in Rockland, Maine. The Island Institute's work focuses on building economic, climate, and community resilience in support of Maine's island and coastal communities. We work with communities where 1 in 5 residents hold a lobster license, and access to a robust working waterfront is critical to the survival of businesses and the economic well-being of families.

Maine's working waterfront is under threat, with only 20 miles remaining along 3,500 miles of coastline. Few state programs are designed to protect private working waterfronts. One of them, the Land for Maine's Future's Working Waterfront Access Protection Program (WWAPP), provides for the protection of working waterfront properties by purchasing a working waterfront covenant. The other State program is the current use valuation program. Beyond that, no other State programs are dedicated to supporting these businesses.

Additionally, Maine's working waterfronts are facing and will continue to face significant pressures from changing demographics and escalating property values on the land side. These places also face significant changes in the Gulf of Maine ecosystem and the regulatory overlays that govern many of the State's fisheries.

We believe that making modest changes to this program to make it more attractive for property owners will help entice additional properties to join the program, resulting in increased security for the fisheries and aquaculture businesses that rely on that working waterfront. Given the pressures facing working waterfronts, it is better to make some changes now rather than wait.

Please support Maine's working waterfronts and the ideas motivating that part of this legislation.