

To: Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations And Financial Affairs  
From: James Wotton, Full-time commercial fishermen, co-owner of Friendship Lobster Co-Op  
Date: March 6th, 2024

**Re: An Act to Provide Funding to Rebuild Infrastructure Affected by Extreme Inland and Coastal Weather Events**

Honorable Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations And Financial Affairs,

My name is James Wotton and I am a commercial fisherman and business owner in Friendship, Maine and I would like to express my support for LD: 2225 An Act to Provide Funding to Rebuild Infrastructure Affected by Extreme Inland and Coastal Weather Events. My community was profoundly struck by the January storms.

I am the co-owner of the Friendship Lobster Co-Op, which supports roughly 20 boats and landed over half a million pounds of lobster last year. I also co-own a bait business and have spent my life in almost every commercial fishery in state and federal waters. My income relies on accessing the ocean and the same goes for my neighbors and family members. The town of Friendship flooded in the recent January storms and the Co-op required a concerted cleanup. Nearby Cranberry Island, where I keep two personal wharves, were hit the hardest. One of them was completely detached from land and will require a total revamp. Five other local, communal, commercial docks suffered extreme damage and the cost and effort to rebuild will be tremendous. The people who rely on those spaces for a living have suffered a major blow.

Friendship is composed of many fishing families who depend on shared wharves for their livelihood. We need all the help we can get so that we can keep fishing next year. Our small town is an iconic one, comprised of Mainers with real character and real grit, but the financial hit that myself and my community took will be difficult to overcome. I hope that you will keep us in mind as you consider LD 2225. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
James Wotton