



MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Testimony in Support of LD 2275 *An Act to Ensure That Rules Regarding the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Are Major Substantive Rules*

March 28, 2024

Good afternoon Senator Reny, Representative Hepler, and members of the Committee on Marine Resources. I am Representative Billy Bob Faulkingham and I represent House District 12 and serve as the House Republican Leader. I am here to testify in support of LD 2275.

My earliest memory is going on a lobster boat with my dad at 3 years old. I remember my nose barely touching the rail on the washboards. So, I guess you can say I have been fishing the Maine waters for 42 years.

I am here to testify on one part of this bill in particular. It is the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) making rule changes to our lobster measure. I may also bear some responsibility in this and I will own that. Managing the lobster fishery is the job of the State of Maine, not outside regulators.

The Maine lobster industry is the gold standard of sustainable wild caught fisheries in the world. Maine lobstermen are good stewards of our resources. Our protection of egg-bearing, v-notch, undersized, oversized lobsters, as well as trap limits, escape vents, and ghost panels has created an example that should be modeled the world over.

Let me be clear, all these regulations came directly from the industry. That is who should have the most significant input in rules that affect the management of the industry. That is why the State of Maine should have a process of checks and balances to rules that significantly change the management of the lobster industry.

Ladies and gentlemen, Maine fishermen are getting sick and tired of constantly fighting for their survival and being treated like lawless criminals for the privilege of going to work. We risk our lives providing healthy, sustainably caught food for the whole world to enjoy. We are fed up with being a nursery for Canadian fisheries, who at times fish the exact same waters as our fishermen.

I want to be clear. I do not want to cause problems with the good management of other fisheries like elver eels, menhaden, or others. However, I am here today for two specific reasons:

The lobster measure. I believe any change to the lobster measure should be a state decision, not dictated from ASMFC, or anyone else. Bring the management of the measure back to the Maine Legislature where it belongs.

The tracking devices. It is insulting and disgusting that the government would essentially treat us like criminals, insisting that we need an ankle-monitoring device for the “privilege” of going to work to earn a living. This is a violation of our privacy and civil liberties.

I recommend that you amend the bill to narrow it down to address these issues and avoid unintended management consequences.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Billy Bob Faulkingham".

Rep. Billy Bob Faulkingham
House Republican Leader