

To: Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
From: Ben Martens, Executive Director
Date: February 5, 2025

Re: LD 210 - An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026, and June 30, 2027



Dear Chair Rotundo, Chair Gattine, and members of the Committee On Appropriations and Financial Affairs,

The Maine Coast Fishermen's Association (MCFA) would like to submit a testimony in **support of LD 210. In particular, we would like to call attention to the funding for the Maine Economic & Community Development program which would establish a small annual grant program focused on domestic trade** and the pay for the necessary staffing to support the successful implementation of said program.

MCFA is a community nonprofit which works to build sustainable fisheries and vibrant fishing communities for future generations. We support the diversity of Maine's fishing businesses and communities with programs focused on rebuilding our Gulf of Maine ecosystem, preserving access to working waterfronts and fishing permits, supporting fishermen wellness, and helping bring increased stability to the seafood marketplace. As part of our work in supporting local groundfish fishermen, those who land cod, haddock, and flounder like species, we are focused on increasing demand in our domestic markets. Maine has a unique brand known for quality, sustainability, and "realness" yet we don't take advantage of those opportunities to create fair prices to local fishermen.

Last year, we were thrilled to be able to apply for and receive a domestic trade grant from DECD's Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan program. We have been able to leverage those funds into hiring a consultant to work with our local Maine fishermen to bring new buyers to the Portland Fish Exchange, map out opportunities for Maine's flaky white fish, and begin the processes of differentiating our local, small-boat seafood in a complicated marketplace. The small-boats and small-businesses of Maine would never have been able to undertake this type of future-looking project without the funding from DECD.

We hope that you will support funding for this program so that it can continue to buoy opportunities for Maine businesses and create lasting impact within our communities.

Sincerely,

Ben Martens
Executive Director