

February 27, 2025

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Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

RE: L.D. 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”

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, and Energy, Utilities and Technology, I appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony regarding my support of the budget proposal for the Governor’s Energy Office (GEO), in particular the initiative to increase the funding for the Maine Offshore Wind Research Consortium (Consortium) to \$1.25 million a year.

In 2021, Governor Mills established the Maine Offshore Wind Research Consortium as part of her commitment to the responsible development of offshore wind off the coast of Maine and to seek to better understand the local and regional impacts of floating offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine through stakeholder engagement and scientific research.

The Consortium is coordinated by the GEO alongside the Department of Marine Resources and the Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife, but its work is guided by a diverse and engaged Advisory Board with representation from commercial and recreational fisheries, marine wildlife and habitats expertise, commercial offshore wind development expertise, state agencies, and representation from federally recognized Tribes, in addition to representatives from Maine-based environmental organizations, community representatives, and scientists from public and private research institutions to ensure a broad stakeholder perspective.

I have served as co-chair of the Fisheries Working Group of the Offshore Wind Roadmap process from the beginning with GEO and was chosen to co-chair the Advisory Board when it was first formed.

To date, funding to the Consortium has delivered high quality, publicly available research to fill critical information gaps identified by Maine stakeholders and ocean users to explore opportunities and challenges that floating offshore wind poses to current and future uses in the Gulf of Maine, how to best support co-existence with the fishing industry, to identify methods to avoid and minimize ecosystem impacts, and to improve cost efficiencies in commercialization.

Dedicating additional general fund dollars to this work is critical to support additional priority research identified by the fishing community and other ocean users, and to inform responsible development in the Gulf of Maine and beyond. The work that the Advisory Board and its partners are doing together to advance this research may be more important now than ever.

With the Gulf of Maine already in the process of being leased its especially important to continue to work to protect the fragile ecosystem in the Gulf of Maine. As a fisherman who has earned his living in the Gulf of Maine for 46 years we all are dependent on that. I can still hear my Dad saying leave the ocean as good as you found it for the next generation of fishermen. That is why I have been so involved since the process started.

I thank the GEO and the Governor for putting forward this budget proposal and ask for the Committee's support of this initiative.

Thank you for your consideration,

Terry Alexander
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Harpwell, Maine