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# MAINE

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## Lobstermen's Association, Inc.

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### **Against**

### **LD 336 An Act to Change the Waiting List System for Commercial Lobster and Crab Fishing Licenses**

March 6, 2025

Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler, and members of the Marine Resources Committee, my name is Jarod Bray. I am the Board Chairman of the Maine Lobstermen's Association (MLA). The MLA opposes LD 336 to change the exit ratio for any lobster zone waiting list to one to one.

The MLA is a strong advocate for the zone council process. It was created to give lobstermen a voice in local management, in partnership with the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and the Legislature, to address local issues in the lobster fishery along the Maine coast. This co-management process is unique and has successfully maintained a sustainable and profitable fishery.

At times, the lobster zone exit ratios have been controversial because the wait lists in certain zones became very long. However, the exit ratios have played an important role in reducing effort in the fishery, which has also reduced the amount of rope in the water and the risk the fishery poses to right whales.

Many believed that the waiting lists would work themselves out given the high average age of lobstermen in the fishery. It appears that this transition is now happening. At the January Lobster Advisory Council meeting, the Commissioner reported that approximately 250 licenses were retired from the lobster fishery in 2024. DMR also reports that waiting lists have shrunk dramatically and wait times to get into the fishery are decreasing across all lobster zones.

The southwestern part of the state has had some of the longest waiting lists. At its recent meeting in January, the Zone F Council discussed gathering input from zone lobstermen to consider lowering its exit ratio. The Zone G Council has not yet formally met yet this year, but lobstermen have begun informal discussions on lowering the exit ratio. As increasing numbers of licenses have been retired, lobstermen are far less concerned that zones are overcrowded and have become more focused on the need to preserve future fishing opportunities for their communities.

If LD 336 were to pass, it would significantly limit input from the zone councils and increase the number of lobstermen and traps in each zone. More traps in the water could lead to reduced profitability for each lobsterman since landings are currently in decline, and more stringent whale rules. The MLA strongly urges the Committee to vote ought not to pass on LD 336.

Thank you for your consideration.