

To: Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources  
From: Emily Coffin, Policy Coordinator  
Date: March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**Re: LD 553: An Act to Assert State Sovereignty over Ocean Waters and Marine Resources up to 12 Nautical Miles off the State's Coast (Emergency)**



Dear Honorable Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Marine Resources:

The Maine Coast Fishermen's Association (MCFA) is an industry-based nonprofit dedicated to restoring the fisheries of the Gulf of Maine and preserving Maine's iconic fishing communities for future generations. We believe in science-based management and the fortification of our fish stocks to ensure healthy resources for future fishermen to catch. Founded by Maine fishermen to provide a voice in fisheries management, MCFA has often been directly involved in proceedings at the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) and other management bodies. **We oppose LD 553 because it aims to strip management of the state's coast from the departments and agencies that we trust to regulate our waters and resources thereof.**

MCFA has worked very closely with state and federal managers throughout our organization's lifetime. We believe in the public and transparent operations that management bodies currently adhere to. Although we may not agree with them on every single rule made, we trust the process and our ability to comment and engage during proceedings, alongside other members of the fishing industry who wish to do so as well. Exerting state sovereignty to 12 miles beyond Maine's coastline would result in confusion and chaos. The ramifications of removing management body oversight such as that of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) would result in Maine being "out of compliance" and therefore unable to advocate for our access to important fisheries such as menhaden and lobster. Last year, when a bill for the Marine Resource Committee proposed that the state leave the ASMFC, Commissioner Keliher and others made it very clear that if the state were to forgo the Commission over one issue, proliferous repercussions would follow.

LD 553 originated in response to herring quota restrictions from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). We cannot afford to jeopardize our standing in federal and state management operations over one unpopular regulation. Our fisheries are in a precarious position as the federal government and NOAA receive cuts in staff and manpower. Already, we have many fires to put out and management actions to prioritize. The state of Maine, which LD 553 aims to place in total charge of the entire coastline, is not equipped to handle such an increase in the time and energy required to faithfully manage all the species that call our waters home. Fishermen, too, would suffer. Management and regulatory actions take a long time. If the state itself were to be responsible for every ruling, fishing activity would be delayed, and fishermen would receive less support from staffers as their workload would increase exorbitantly. LD 553 would be an inopportune and inappropriate measure to take at this time.

We urge the Joint Committee on Marine Resources not to pass LD 538, for the sake of our fishermen, fishery staff members, and state's wellbeing. Thank you for your time and attention to our comments.

Thank you,  
Emily Coffin, Policy Coordinator  
Maine Coast Fishermen's Association

