



March 27th, 2025

The Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

My name is Liz MacDonald, I am the Seaweed Supply Director at Atlantic Sea Farms and a member of the Governor's Blue Economy Task Force. I want to testify in support of LD 1023, legislation to continue the work of the Maine Blue Economy Task Force.

Over the past 6 months the Task Force has worked alongside consultants to put together a high level report of Maine's Blue Economy identifying the stakeholders and refining the important economic opportunities at hand for our people, industries and state. This report was constructed to highlight the key areas where we see future investment opportunities across sectors to help us organize, accelerate and outcompete other states and countries for valuable economic gains to our communities.

As the leading domestic farmed seaweed company, Atlantic Sea Farms is uniquely positioned to grow and scale the industry with a qualified workforce of fishermen who already possess key working knowledge to grow high quality kelp in their own home waters. In addition to the economic benefits to our commercial fishing industry and coastal communities, seaweed puts our state on the map for yet another healthy and sustainable ocean product.

Regulatory barriers stand to limit our progress in Maine's aquaculture sector and blue economy. Maine's aquaculture regulations are rigorous, comprehensive, and some of the best in the world. However, the lengthy 3 to sometimes 4 years to obtain an aquaculture lease permit in Maine is a bottleneck for both farmers and businesses, and it discourages outside investment from coming to Maine. Maine is missing out on investment opportunities and other states like Alaska & Washington are getting the funds Maine should be receiving to grow our aquaculture sector, improve domestic seafood supply, and support coastal communities.

Additionally, limited state and federal investment is a barrier to the growth of small businesses like Atlantic Sea Farms that are first to market innovators. We look towards state and federal funding programs that aim to bolster our mission and drive direct impact to Maine's working waterfronts and coastal communities. These investments strengthen innovative efforts in product development in both the regenerative food space and emergent markets that span biostimulants, nutraceuticals, animal feeds, supplements, bioplastics and more.

A coordinated strategy is paramount in moving Maine forward as a leader in the Blue Economy both nationally and globally. The continuation of the Task Force should be precisely focused on the recommendation outlined in the Task Force's report, and include access to funds to support the project consultants to produce timely, efficient reporting for the Task Force work.

I thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,
Liz MacDonald
Seaweed Supply Director, Atlantic Sea Farms