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LD 841

I am writing to testify that without access to a ferry docked on-island over night, the safety and sustainability of our year-round community will be drastically impacted.

North Haven island is growing. Unlike the population of our state as a whole, the population of North Haven island is growing larger and growing younger. This is positive and promising for the sustainability of our island and island populations in general.

The ferry boat not being accessible at night for emergency services could change this all. Most families on North Haven do not own their own lobster boats. People on North Haven are diversifying their occupations as the lobstering industry shows uncertainty in the future. Therefore, most families could not access their own boats to reach the mainland in an emergency. In addition, our EMT crew is largely volunteer and we cannot ask these volunteers to risk dangerous waters in small vessels through winters that are increasingly stormy.

Given these realities, if the ferry is no longer accessible to North Haven residents and EMS services, people will see that as a reason to leave the island. It will also be a deterrent for new people moving to North Haven.

We are a vibrant community because we have young people moving here. We have retirees moving here. We have families with young children moving here. That helps our K-12 school, our community center, our island market and restaurants, our library, and our EMS and Fire crews remain sustainable. That could change immediately with this decision. This decision will, without a doubt affect every aspect of our island trajectory.

It is important to understand that unbridged islands are fragile ecosystems and this decision could collapse ours completely.

Thank you.