



MAINE

Lobstermen's Association, Inc.

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Against

LD 1341 Resolve, Directing the Department of Marine Resources to Evaluate How to Effectively Allow Two Licensed Individuals to Fish for Lobsters or Scallops from a Single Vessel.

April 10, 2025

Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler, and members of the Marine Resources Committee, the Maine Lobstermen's Association (MLA) submits this testimony in opposition to LD 1341 which would allow two licensed individuals to fish for lobster or scallops from the same vessel.

The MLA first learned about the concept for this bill on February 10, 2025, at the Lobster Advisory Council meeting. We understand that the bill is well intended as a tool to help lobstermen and scallopers save on operating expenses and ensure the health and safety of fishermen. The MLA, however, is extremely concerned about any changes to lobster management that would alter the owner-operator model or create a loophole to increase effort.

The MLA does not see the need to explore such a provision for the lobster fishery. The state already allows someone else to run a vessel in certain cases, like medical issues, with approval from Maine Marine Patrol. As the lobster fishery changes, lobstermen are actively adjusting their operating strategy to control costs while maximizing catch. For example, DMR data has shown that lobstermen are taking fewer trips to ensure that each fishing trip is profitable to control costs.

The lobster industry's owner-operator model is critical in ensuring the industry's stewardship practices remain strong because each license holder must fish their own traps, and therefore, are directly tied to the health of the resource. The owner-operator provision also keeps profits in our local communities, most of which have limited economic opportunities.

The MLA is concerned that allowing two licenses to be fished from the same vessel would result in an increased effort at a time when lobster landings are declining, and we still have people who have completed the Apprentice Program waiting for a commercial license.

The MLA is also concerned that letting two licensed individuals fish from the same vessel would encourage the use of inactive licenses, increasing pressure on the resource at a time when the industry is discussing management approaches that would bolster the stock.

Finally, Maine's lobster fishery will also face significant changes when new whale rules are put in place in 2028. If new whale rules require ropeless fishing, this will create significant pressure for consolidation in the fishery which could eliminate the owner-operator provision due to the high cost of adopting and implementing that technology. We must not do anything that will erode this defining tenet of the lobster fishery which has been so critical to the social, economic and conservation success of the fishery.

The MLA urges you to vote ought not to pass on LD 1341. We must preserve the owner-operator provision to keep effort under control, keep lobster profits local, and ensure conservation standards are upheld.

Thank you for your consideration.