



April 10, 2025

The Honorable Margaret Rotundo, Senate Chair  
The Honorable Drew Gattine, House Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs  
State House, Room 228  
Augusta, ME. 04333

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Honorable members of the Joint Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs :

My name is Sebastian Belle and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Aquaculture Association (MAA). The MAA is the oldest state aquaculture association in the country. We represent Maine's aquatic farmers that raise finfish, shellfish and sea vegetables. Our farmers annually produce over 100 million dollars in farm gate revenue and directly employ roughly 700 Maine citizens year-round. We purchase goods and services from over 400 Maine businesses and our total economic impact is roughly 150 million dollars annually. MAA is a founding member of the Working Waterfront Coalition and has repeatedly fought for policies and funding that support Maines working waterfronts.

I apologize for not being able to appear before you in person today, to testify in strong support of LD 362 "An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Replenish the Land for Maine's Future Program". Maine working waterfronts are by far the states working "landscape" that is most in danger of disappearing. Maines coastal communities are changing rapidly. Post COVID gentrification of those communities has accelerated, and we are losing commercial working waterfronts faster than ever before. Once a working waterfront property is converted to residential use it never goes back to commercial use. We now have entire bays that have no working waterfront left and fisherman and seafarmers must travel to adjacent bays to load and off load gear and harvested products. That additional travel and the lack of local infrastructure may significantly increase the dangers harvesters are exposed to in winter and foul weather. LD 25 will give the Maine public a chance to support state investment to protect working waterfront properties and help our coastal communities preserve Maines maritime heritage. Please vote OUGHT TO PASS on LD 25. Thank you for your attention, I would be glad to answer any questions you may have at the work session.

Sincerely,

Sebastian M. Belle  
Executive Director