



Matthea Elisabeth Larsen Daughtry  
President of the Senate

THE MAINE SENATE  
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

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***Testimony of Senate President Mattie Daughtry in support of  
LD 1336, “An Act to Establish the Maine-Aomori Sister-state Advisory Council”  
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development***

Good afternoon, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and esteemed members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee. My name is Mattie Daughtry and I am proud to serve as the President of the Maine State Senate, where I am honored to represent Senate District 23, which includes Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island, and part of Yarmouth.

Since the establishment of our sister-state relationship in 1994, Maine and the Japanese province of Aomori have cultivated a collaborative bond that has yielded significant benefits, particularly in the area of aquaculture. Aquaculture is an industry my district holds dear. Aomori is renowned for its excellence in scallop farming, and Maine has been actively learning from their expertise. Techniques such as “ear hanging” have been shared with us, allowing Maine’s scallop farmers to enhance their practices and increase production. This collaboration is not just about sharing methods; it’s about exchanging knowledge that drives our local seafood industry’s growth and innovation. Our first official delegation to Aomori in 1994 introduced us to these practices, and subsequent visits, including a fisheries-only delegation in 1997 and further delegations in 2010 and 2016, have deepened our understanding and adoption of these techniques.

The relationship between Maine and Aomori extends beyond economic collaboration. Cultural initiatives like the Maine-Aomori Printmaking Society (MAPS) have fostered art exchanges and residencies, promoting mutual cultural understanding and educational projects highlighting our sister-state connection.

As a business owner, I recognize the immense value that LD 1336 will bring. By formalizing the Maine-Aomori Sister-state Advisory Council, we create a structured way to facilitate further exchanges in aquaculture, and beyond. This council will enable more streamlined communication and collaboration, paving the way for technology transfers that can lead to remarkable advancements in local industries. Increased access to Aomori’s cutting-edge equipment and techniques could allow Maine’s scallop industry to thrive, producing higher quality products that meet growing market demands. Moreover, the economic impact of enhanced collaboration with Aomori cannot be overstated. By investing in our sister-state relationship through this advisory council, we lay the groundwork for future trade opportunities that could include the exchange of expertise, equipment, and potentially even fresh scallops, which are in high demand.

Let us not underestimate the potential of our relationship with Aomori. The collaboration we have experienced so far has already led to increased scallop farming in Maine, and the foundation this bill creates will only bolster future success. LD 1336 represents a commitment to investing in our local aquaculture industry and ensuring that Maine can compete and thrive in a global seafood market.

I strongly urge you to support LD 1336. By establishing the Maine-Aomori Sister-state Advisory Council, we are committing to a future of enhanced economic development, cultural exchange, and innovation beginning with our aquaculture industry. Let us take this important step towards strengthening our ties with Aomori and unlocking the full potential of our collaboration.

Thank you for your time and consideration.