

Brendan Parsons
Nobleboro
LD 1596

To the Honorable Members of the Marine Resources Committee,
My name is Brendan Parsons, and I am the owner and operator of Blackstone Point Oysters, an aquaculture farm based in Maine. I am writing to express my strong support for both LD 1596: An Act to Support Maine's Sea Farmers and LD 1722: An Act to Simplify the Regulation of Aquaculture Leases.

As a sea farmer working directly within the aquaculture industry, I have experienced firsthand the mounting challenges and frustrations that come with navigating our state's current lease and amendment processes. What was once a promising and innovative industry is increasingly burdened by regulatory hurdles that delay our ability to grow and adapt. In some cases, we are seeing wait times of multiple years just to receive decisions on relatively minor lease amendments—such as changing a float size or shifting gear types within the same operational category. These delays are not just inconvenient; they directly impact our ability to operate sustainably and profitably.

LD 1596 represents a much-needed course correction. By establishing clear, reasonable thresholds for when amendments are necessary—based on operational impact rather than arbitrary gear specifications—it will allow lease holders like myself to innovate responsibly without getting bogged down in unnecessary red tape. Furthermore, enabling the use of contract divers for site assessments is a pragmatic solution that will reduce the Department's administrative backlog and help avoid missed growing seasons due to prolonged delays.

Similarly, LD 1722 offers a streamlined path for lease renewals and conversions that maintains essential oversight while acknowledging the reality that many aquaculture operations have already proven their viability and compliance over time. Requiring a full adjudicatory process for a lease that has had no violations and proposes no operational changes is inefficient and only serves to exacerbate the Department's existing staffing challenges.

Both of these bills are grounded in common sense and reflect feedback that the aquaculture community has been voicing for years. We are not asking to lower standards or skirt oversight—we are asking for a system that supports responsible innovation, reduces unnecessary bureaucracy, and allows sea farmers to build sustainable businesses that contribute to Maine's coastal economy.

I urge the Committee to support LD 1596 and LD 1722 and to help modernize the aquaculture leasing system in a way that benefits both the industry and the state. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Brendan Parsons
Owner, Blackstone Point Oysters