

Mount Desert Island Regional School System – AOS #91

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Subject: Letter of Support for LD 1231 - An Act Requiring Ferries to Dock Overnight on Certain Islands for Emergency Purposes

To the Honorable Members of the Committee on Transportation,

I am writing to you today to strongly support **Legislative Document No. 1231 (LD 1231)**, "An Act Requiring Ferries to Dock Overnight on Certain Islands for Emergency Purposes." As the Superintendent of schools serving the island community of Swan's Island, this legislation is crucial for the safety, well-being, and long-term viability of our unique Maine Island communities.

The core directive of LD 1231 is clear: it **directs the Department of Transportation to require the Maine State Ferry Service to nightly dock a ferry vessel that carries vehicles overnight in the towns of Swan's Island, Vinalhaven, North Haven, and Islesboro for emergency medical, fire, and law enforcement needs.** This seemingly straightforward requirement holds profound implications for our island communities.

As highlighted in previous discussions, the primary motivation behind this bill is to **support the use of ferries for emergency medical, fire, and law enforcement needs, including mass evacuation.** For our schools and the families we serve, this translates directly into enhanced safety and security.

Consider the following benefits:

- **Improved Emergency Medical Response:** In the event of a medical emergency involving a student, staff member, or any community member, the overnight availability of a ferry would significantly expedite the transport of medical personnel, equipment, or the individual needing critical care to the mainland. Timely access to advanced medical facilities can be life-saving.
- **Facilitation of Mass Evacuation:** While we hope it never becomes necessary, having a ferry readily available for overnight mass evacuation in the face of a major emergency provides a critical safety net for our island residents.

Beyond immediate emergency response, the consistent overnight ferry access fostered by LD 1231 strengthens our island communities and supports their long-term viability in several ways:

- **Increased Sense of Security:** Knowing that a vital transportation link for emergencies is consistently available overnight provides a greater sense of security and well-being for our residents. This is particularly important for families with young children and individuals with health concerns.
- **Supports Community Sustainability:** For island communities to remain vibrant and sustainable, residents need to feel safe and have access to essential services. The assurance

of emergency access facilitated by this bill can encourage families to remain on the islands and attract new residents, helping to maintain school enrollment and the overall vitality of the community.

- **Addresses Unique Island Challenges:** Island communities face unique challenges due to their geographic isolation. This legislation directly addresses one of the most critical challenges – access to emergency services outside of the regular ferry schedule.

In conclusion, LD 1231 is not just about transportation; it is about ensuring the safety, security, and long-term viability of Maine's cherished island communities. As a school superintendent deeply invested in the well-being of our students and families, I urge you to support this vital legislation.

Sincerely,

Mike Zboray, Superintendent of Schools

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