

Shepard Walker
Swans Island
LD 1231

I fully support bill LD 1231 an act requiring ferries to dock on certain islands overnight for emergency purposes. As a firefighter and ambulance driver, I know firsthand the critical importance of having quick easy access to the mainland for transporting patients to medical facilities.

By keeping the ferry on Swans Island overnight, (as we always have) we enhance our ability to quickly get our patients on the mainland to a hospital facility without delay. This is not just about convenience; it's about saving lives.

Without the swans island ferry in mackerel cove on swans island at night, we rely solely on life flight; (which cannot always fly when winds are high, or there is rain or fog.) or much smaller boats, like lobster fishing boats or charter boats to transport patients across blue hill bay in the middle of the night. It is much easier on first responders and the patients; both financially and for comfort during transport, for us to be able to use the ferry which we can drive the ambulance onto, without having to move the patient another time. The price of lifeflight is very expensive and lifeflight is not always available for us. Taking a patient on a smaller boat means taking them out of the ambulance, exposing them to sometimes harsh weather and puts more of a safety/discomfort risk for everyone involved. Emergency trip by ferry is also the only way that a patients family/friends also on island can follow along in another vehicle to the hospital on the mainland.

As an ambulance driver I have seen on many occasions times in winter when the weather is not good; the only way off the island then is by the ferry or it would be the coast guard. The ferry can get us off much faster than having to wait on a coast guard boat that is coming from other harbors. Swans island is no different from anywhere else when it comes to injuries and sickness; we have had persons with heart attacks, stroke, broken bones, etc... without the option of the ferry for emergencies we would be putting swans islanders safety and well being at risk.

As a firefighter, I know the importance at large fires of having our mutual aid trucks from other towns come on and help us. If the ferry is not on our side and its crew not living nearby the boat, we will not be able to go pick up on the ferry neighboring fire departments trucks to help us as we have had to do in the past.

I have heard that leaving the ferry in bass harbor is so the crew can go home at night, but some of our crew lives on swans island so this would not even work for them at all. The other crew I've talked to did not want the ferry in bass harbor either, because they would have a much longer commute; driving over an hour to work than they do now in the crews quarters by the ferry terminal in mackerel cove.

I urge our lawmakers to prioritize the safety and well-being of our community by passing this bill.

Thank you for considering the urgent needs of all our island's residents.

Sincerely,
Swans islander, Shepard Walker.