



Testimony of Island Institute in Support of LD 947 and LD 1231

April 29, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and Members of the Transportation Committee, my name is Nick Battista, and I am testifying on behalf of Island Institute in support of the intent behind LD 947 and LD 1231.

Island Institute is a 42-year-old nonprofit organization based in Rockland, Maine. We boldly navigate climate and economic change with island and coastal communities to expand opportunities and deliver solutions. Much of our work takes place in the communities that are highly dependent on fishing, and the bulk of these communities are east of Damariscotta. The economy of these communities is closely tied to fishing and aquaculture, and these industries rely heavily on working waterfront infrastructure.

The Maine State Ferry Service serves 6 of Maine's 15 island year-round island communities. Recognizing the importance of the Maine State Ferry Service to Maine's island communities, between 2021 and 2023, Island Institute engaged KPFF, a nationally recognized transportation consulting firm with deep experience on ferry related issues to develop a series of reports and materials on the Maine State Ferry Service. This included the first demand driven study of the ferry service, as well as a deep dive into various operational issues. We worked closely with both Maine DOT/Maine State Ferry Service and a group of island community advisors who are very knowledgeable about how ferry related matters impact their community and who have spent years working to improve ferry service for their communities.

Here is a summary of existing transportation needs - <https://www.islandinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Summary-of-Transportation-Needs-by-Island.pdf> Please note, page 4 includes a discussion about reliable emergency transportation. Of note, all four of the Islands that receive emergency transportation services from MSFS "noted that the ferry has become less available as an option for after hours emergency trips."

Additionally, through this process, KPFF also provided a set of Ferry Operator Best Practices - https://www.islandinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Ferry-Operator-Best-Practices-Review_DRAFT.pdf that includes a look at how other ferry services around the country provide or don't provide emergency transportation options. Of the 9 services reviewed, 4 were included in the emergency transport section. This section starts on page 6 and goes to page 10 with a deep dive into the operations of different ferry services.

Where the ferries are based overnight plays a significant role in whether they are available for emergency transportation. With limited other options available to these communities, Island Institute supports the intention behind both of these pieces of legislation.