



May 2, 2025

The Honorable Chip Curry, Senate Chair
The Honorable Traci Gere, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development
State House, Room 206
Augusta, ME. 04333

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, Honorable members of the Joint Committee on Housing and Economic Development:

My name is Sebastian Belle and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Aquaculture Association (MAA). The MAA is the oldest state aquaculture association in the country. We are a volunteer membership association whose board of directors is selected to represent the diversity of the aquaculture sector in terms of species, production method and company size. Irrespective of company size each company has one vote. We represent Maine's aquatic farmers that raise finfish, shellfish and sea vegetables. Our farmers annually produce over 100 million dollars in farm gate revenue and directly employ roughly 700 Maine citizens year-round. We purchase goods and services from over 400 Maine businesses and our total economic impact is roughly 150 million dollars annually.

I stand before you today to testify in strong support of LD 1245 "An Act to Create a Fund to Spread Awareness of Maine's Working Waterfronts". The MAA is one of the Founding Members of the Maine Working Waterfront Coalition. Our members live and work up and down Maine's coastline and rely on working waterfront properties to conduct our businesses. Sadly, Maine's working waterfronts are in danger of being overwhelmed by gentrification and conversion to residential uses. Although working waterfronts are part of the iconic Maine brand many new residents know very little about them. Efforts to educate the public about working waterfronts have been haphazard and woefully under funded. LD 1245 seeks to bring existing state resources to bear on this important issue and begin to help the public understand what working waterfronts are and why they are so important to our coastal communities.

I ask that you to vote **Ought To Pass** on LD 1245 and help support a big part of Maine's iconic brand. Thank you for your attention, I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Sebastian M. Belle
Executive Director