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Testimony of Sprague Energy in Support of LD 1874, An Act to Enable the Maine Pilotage Commission to  
Oversee Pilots Operating in Portland Harbor

May 14, 2025

Dear Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and esteemed members of the Transportation Committee, my name is Tim Winters, and I am the Vice President of Operations at Sprague Operating Resources. I am also a former merchant mariner and Maine Maritime Academy alumnus. I am writing to urge the Committee to support LD 1874, *An Act to Enable the Maine Pilotage Commission to Oversee Pilots Operating in Portland Harbor*.

As you may be aware, Sprague Operating Resources relies on sea pilots in Maine to safely navigate vessels to and from our terminals in Portland Harbor and Searsport. Currently, these pilots are regulated by two separate entities, the Portland Board of Harbor Commissioners, and the Maine Pilotage Commission. Having supported the Portland Pilots during their last rate adjustment proceeding before the Portland Board of Harbor Commissioners, I recognize the significant differences in expertise and efficiency on pilot related issues as between the Portland Board of Harbor Commissioners and the Maine Pilotage Commission. For this key reason, having all pilots in Maine – including those in Portland Harbor – regulated by the Maine Pilotage Commission makes good sense.

The Portland Board of Harbor Commissioners is tasked with many more duties than just pilotage. They are responsible for dredging, moorings, docking and other issues besides pilotage. The majority of the Portland Board is not required to have maritime expertise, which means that the Board often does not have experience with regard to the service they are tasked to regulate.

By contrast, the Maine Pilotage Commission has only one focus, to regulate all aspects of pilotage in the State of Maine. Moreover, the Maine Pilotage Commission is comprised strictly of industry professionals and stakeholders, including several from the Portland area. The end result is a more efficient commission with greater expertise that would continue to improve maritime safety and commerce in Portland Harbor.

Governing every sea pilot under the same regulatory body, as LD 1874 proposes, would not only be more efficient, but it would also allow for greater consistency in training, licensure, investigation, and rate setting. This would result in more clarity for vessels calling at different terminals in different ports in Maine.



I appreciate that LD 1874 recognizes there are explicit differences, geographical constraints and needs between all ports. In fact, this bill requires that the pilotage regulations in Portland Harbor would transfer over to the Maine Pilotage Commission, including several training and apprenticeship provision that are unique to the port and were established in the interest of safety for the Cities of Portland and South Portland.

If LD 1874 passes, I am confident that the Maine Pilotage Commission will continue to follow through with its Declaration of Policy, stated in Title 38, Chapter 1, Subchapter 3, p. 85, *“It is declared to be the policy and intent of the Legislature and the purpose of this subchapter to provide for a system of state pilotage in order to provide maximum safety from the dangers of navigation for vessels entering or leaving the waters described in this subchapter, to maintain a state pilotage system devoted to the preservation and protection of lives, property, the environment and vessels entering or leaving these waters at the highest standard of efficiency and to insure the availability of pilots well qualified for the discharge of their duties in aid of commerce and navigation.”*

Thank you for your time considering my testimony, and I urge you to support LD 1874.

Sincerely,

Tim Winters, VP Operations  
Sprague Operating Resources