

Monique Coombs
Maine Coast Fishermen's Association
LD 2069

Dear Members of the Committee on State and Local Government,

On behalf of the Maine Coast Fishermen's Association (MCFA), I write in strong support of the proposed proclamation recognizing July 21, 2025 as a day of remembrance for Maine fishermen who have lost their lives at sea.

Maine's working waterfronts are the backbone of our coastal communities and an essential part of our state's identity. Commercial fishing is not only one of Maine's most iconic industries, but one of its most demanding and dangerous. The men and women who fish our waters do so in an environment defined by uncertainty, weather that can turn in minutes, physically taxing labor, long hours, and ever-present risk. Too many Maine families and fishing communities have experienced the devastating loss of loved ones who did not return home. These losses ripple far beyond individual families, affecting entire towns.

I write also to remember one of our own. On January 23, 2020, Capt. Arnold "Joe" Nickerson IV, then President of MCFA's Board of Directors and a devoted advocate for fishermen across our state, died at sea along with his crew member, Christopher Pinkham, when his vessel the Hayley Ann capsized and sank. Joe was a fourth-generation Maine fisherman whose leadership, experience, and quiet strength deeply shaped our organization and the broader fishing community. His loss was a profound loss to families, friends, and all of us at MCFA.

Establishing a formal day of remembrance acknowledges that grief, honors the sacrifices made, and affirms that the lives lost to the sea are not forgotten.

Importantly, this proclamation also serves as a call to action. By pairing remembrance with responsibility, Maine has an opportunity to recommit to the safety, health, and recovery of those who continue to work on the water. Organizations across the state that support fishing families and working waterfront communities stand ready to strengthen training, improve access to safety equipment and resources, and continue building a culture where prevention, preparedness, and safety are prioritized.

Recognizing July 21, 2025 as a day of remembrance is a meaningful and necessary step, one that honors the past, supports those who are still grieving, and reinforces our shared obligation to protect the future of Maine's fishing industry and the people who sustain it.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to Maine's coastal communities, working waterfronts, and commercial fishermen.

Respectfully submitted,
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Director of Community Programs
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