

Bill LD 2069: "An Act Designating July 21st as Maine Commercial Fishing Remembrance Day"

Northeast Center for Occupational Health & Safety
1 Atwell Road
Cooperstown, NY 13326

To the Committee Chair & Members:

We at the Northeast Center for Occupational Health & Safety strive to enhance the health and safety of agricultural, forestry and fishing (AgFF) workers throughout the Northeast. Our organization serves AgFF workers from Maine to Maryland, with much of our work with commercial fishermen taking place in Maine. We write in strong support of Bill LD 2069 to designate July 21st as Maine Commercial Fishing Remembrance Day.

Commercial fishing, though one of the most dangerous occupations in the US, has shaped Maine's coastal identity for generations. Commercial fishermen are 13 times more likely to die on the job than the average worker, with East Coast fisheries reporting 288 fatalities between 2000 and 2019 [data from the National Institutes for Occupational Safety & Health].

Over the years, we have worked with many fishermen and unfortunately, many have shared stories about crew members or family who have died while fishing, and these events haunt these individuals for the rest of their lives. Many know someone who never came home. Our research also indicates that trauma is an issue in the industry and these effects can lead to issues with sleep, substance use disorder and other physical and mental health concerns. Just one year ago, two fishermen, father and son, Chet and Aaron Barrett were lost at sea in Maine when their vessel went down. But this isn't just a job to fishermen, it's a way of life passed down through generations with strong cultural ties to the working waterfront.

By designating a Commercial Fishing Remembrance Day, families, friends, fellow fishermen, and coastal communities that experience these losses so deeply, will have the opportunity to share memories of their loved ones and support each other in the healing process. However, it will also importantly underscore to the public the price these workers pay to ensure the rest of society has nutritious food on the table. This kind of recognition is essential in efforts to gather support for initiatives focused on crucial safety research, safety at sea training and search and rescue support to fishermen. We urge you to vote "yes" on Bill LD 2069.

Amanda Roome
Northeast Center for Occupational Health & Safety
LD 2069

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