

To: Committee on Health and Human Services

From: WanTing Huo

Date: January 27, 2026

Re: Testimony in support of LD 2144, “Resolve, to Establish the Working Group to Prioritize Wellness and Mental Health Resources for Heritage Industries”

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is WanTing Huo. I am a resident of Biddeford and a student at the Maine School of Science and Mathematics. I am writing in support of LD 2144, “Resolve, to Establish the Working Group to Prioritize Wellness and Mental Health Resources for Heritage Industries.”

Through my work as an aquaculture ambassador with the University of Maine 4-H Extension, I have seen firsthand, while working on a kelp farming project, how repetitive and physically demanding this work is, and how much pressure comes with long days, environmental uncertainty, and financial risk.

More recently, I attended the Northeast Aquaculture Conference & Exposition, where I spoke with many people working in kelp, oyster, lobster, and other aquaculture and fishing industries. While many expressed great pride in their work, many also shared experiences of constant stress, isolation, and a culture of needing to “push through” challenges rather than ask for help. Even when support is needed, mental health resources are often not easy to access—especially for those living in coastal and rural communities—or not designed for the realities of this work.

LD 2144 is important because it brings together people who understand both heritage industries and mental health care to identify real gaps and develop realistic, long-term solutions.

Supporting mental health is essential to sustaining Maine's heritage industries and the communities built around them, as farmers and harvesters are the backbone of this state.

I strongly encourage you to vote ought to pass on LD 2144 for all of the above reasons.

Sincerely,

WanTing Huo

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JustME for JustUS
LD 2144

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