

To: Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Roz O'Reilly

Date: 28 January 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 Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Roz O'Reilly. I am a resident of South Portland and the Advocacy Coordinator at JustME for JustUS (JMJU), an organization focused on amplifying youth voices in rural Maine. I am writing in support of LD 2144: Resolve, to Establish the Working Group to Prioritize Wellness and Mental Health Resources for Heritage Industries.

From Oxford County to Washington County, JMJU's organizers live and work in and around Maine's precious heritage industries. We have grandmothers who kept track of cattle, cousins who rake blueberries, friends who harvest carrots. The fishing, farming, logging, and ship-building industries are woven generations-deep into the communities we work to protect every day.

Within these communities, we get to share conversations centered around issues young people see arising. Our 13 organizers across 7 counties in Maine have a lot of conversations, and I don't think a single organizer can get through a conversation without mental health coming up.

This isn't happening by coincidence. Work in the heritage industries is taxing on one's physical and mental health, yet the "get-er-done" attitude Mainers embody leaves little room for discussion about the work's impact on us.

The young people in our communities' heritage industries carry generations' worth of mental health challenges in their souls. They carry the future of these industries on their shoulders.

These young workers deserve the proper resources to support the struggles and the hope they're carrying. LD 2144 is an exploration of just that: how can we better support the mental health of our heritage industries' workers – and consequently, the farms and fisheries that are the foundation and future of our communities?

For all the above reasons, JustME for JustUS urges you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 2144.

Sincerely,

Roz O'Reilly

*Advocacy Coordinator* | JustME for JustUS

