

Ben Conniff
Luke's Lobster
LD 2002

Esteemed Members of the Marine Resources Committee,

Please accept this testimony in favor of the Act to extend the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative. I am a member of the MLMC's Board of Advisors, and a co-founder of Luke's Lobster, a 16-year-old lobster business with multi-generational roots in the lobster industry, buying Maine lobster directly from fishermen and fishing coops and selling it in restaurants and grocery products around the country.

It has been a tough economic year for our industry. Fishermen have struggled to pay their fuel and bait bills. Processors have gone out of business or had to shrink their operations. The only answer to making the economics work for the entire lobster supply chain is to continue to build markets, entice buyers, and grow customer awareness and desire to purchase Maine lobster. While our reality this year was tough, it would have been much tougher were it not for the efforts of MLMC, which have compounded year over year to drastically increase public awareness, appreciation, and demand for lobster, and specifically to carve out a special role in consumers' hearts for MAINE lobster, particularly the new shell lobster that represents so much of our catch.

MLMC has not been perfect. Marketing efforts never will be. There is some science to marketing, but much of it is art. There are many ways that we can laud the success of MLMC through metrics like impressions, page visits, and click throughs. But to me, the real proof has been in the way they have made the halo of Maine lobster shine brighter, guided us through tough message challenges when the fishery was under attack, and given us all the tools we need to tell amazing stories about people and product to our buyers.

Please continue to support the work that MLMC does, and I am confident that they will continue to help us grow the market for Maine lobster, make corrections and improvements in response to clear feedback from fishermen and dealers, and help us get through these tough times and move towards greater shared prosperity.

Thank you,
Ben