

March 4, 2026

Committee on Housing and Economic Development
Cross Building, Room 206
Augusta, ME 04333

Subject: Oppose LD 2216: **An Act to Establish the Maine Blue Economy Center**

Dear Housing and Economic Development Committee,

I am writing to express strong opposition to LD 2216 and urge the Committee to reject this bill. This legislation represents another expansion of the aquaculture industry without adequate environmental assessment, regulatory oversight, or consideration of impacts to our communities or the economic goals within our municipalities.

LD 2216 expands aquaculture development without thorough environmental impact assessments. This approach ignores the potential risks and consequences to our marine ecosystems, water quality, wild fish populations or endangered species. Any expansion of aquaculture operations must be preceded by rigorous, independent environmental review—not pursued in its absence.

The aquaculture industry in Maine has been operating under insufficient oversight. The aquaculture industry has received millions in federal funding and promotion while remaining inadequately regulated. Adding a layer of state investment and support without strengthening regulatory requirements results in subsidies for an industry that has failed to demonstrate accountability for its impacts upon the environment.

Maine's tourism industry depends on clean waters, healthy marine ecosystems, and environmental stewardship. Expanding aquaculture without environmental safeguards threatens assets that drive tourism, revenue, and jobs. This bill prioritizes one industry at the expense of another without weighing the trade-offs.

In the last legislative session, a bill was put forth to eliminate public hearings for aquaculture lease renewals. This action represents a troubling erosion of democratic process and public accountability. The Committee should ensure that LD 2216 does not continue this pattern of limiting public participation and transparency. Any legislation affecting Maine's waters and economy must include a process for robust public input.

I need to also note that “no opposition voices” appear to be represented on this Committee. This raises serious questions about whether the Committee is able to conduct a balanced review of this legislation. A fair hearing offers diverse perspectives, including those from environmental advocates, tourism industry representatives, and communities affected by aquaculture operations.

I urge the Committee to ****reject LD 2216**** and instead direct resources to:

- Perform comprehensive environmental impact assessments of aquaculture operations, new and proposed.
- Strengthen regulatory oversight of the aquaculture industry
- Foster public hearings and transparency requirements for all aquaculture licensing and lease renewals
- Conduct economic analysis of the impacts upon Maine's tourism sector
- Solicit community input from affected stakeholders.

Maine's natural resources belong to all of us. Our resources should never be allocated to any industry without rigorous environmental review, adequate regulation, and public participation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Carrie Peabody
Jonesport Maine

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LD 2216

Please accept this submission as written testimony only.