

James Davenport Testimony
LD 693 – Wake Surfing Setback

March 2023

To: The Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

**RE: LD 693– An Act to Protect Inland Water Quality,
Shorelines, Wildlife and Public Safety by Prohibiting
Operation of a Wake Boat to Create an Enhanced Wake
Close to Shore or in Shallow Water**

Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry, and members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, my name is James Davenport. My father and I own Long Lake Marina, and we have two locations in Naples and Bridgton, Maine. We sell several lines of boats including Yamaha, Nautique, and Barletta Pontoons, and provide marine service, repairs, and indoor heated winter storage to over 800 customers a season.

I first want to thank the committee for the opportunity to testify today in opposition to LD 693. As a marine business owner, restrictive policies like this will absolutely have a negative impact on my business and the 31 full time employees who are part of the Long Lake Marina family, as well as other businesses in the boating industry throughout our state.

The marine industry as a whole is an integral part of Maine's economy. It is important to highlight the economic impact recreational boating has throughout Maine, and vital to injecting revenue into more remote parts of the state. **Outdoor recreation made up 3.6% of Maine's economy, making Maine one of the top five states in the country in the value outdoor recreation added to statewide GDP.** Furthermore, according to data from the National Marine Manufacturer's Association recreational boating in Maine supported 14,072 Jobs at 592 businesses and restrictive policies like LD 693 stand to put at risk these jobs and businesses.

From a business standpoint this legislation is akin to a death blow if passed, as it will severely reduce access for this emerging recreational activity while also hurting consumer

confidence, pushing away potential customers and discouraging current owners. These vessels are not only important for Long Lake Marine and small boating businesses from a sales standpoint, but also offer an important stream of year-round revenue due to the associated service and storage.

The consumers that this industry caters to have made most likely made a seven-figure investment in a waterfront home, a new boat, a dock, and paid an oversized share of taxes and fees for the right to this access. To arbitrarily restrict access to the lake that these individuals have purchased a home on based on the desired choice of boat feels short sighted and exclusionary.

Additionally, if passed there is the concern of how this new regulation will be effectively enforced. Law Enforcement Officers with the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife are already spread thin considering the territory they must cover. Do we truly believe this is the best use of our limited water safety resources is to police people on their distance from shore and depth? Or should it be to focus on potentially life threatening situations?

Instead of putting in place overly restrictive and hard to enforce policies I encourage the committee and department of inland fisheries and wildlife to focus on increasing enforcement capacity surrounding existing distance from shore requirements while also leading a campaign focused on user education, to reinforce the importance proper, respectful, and safe vessel operation to recreational boaters. We adhere to the WSIA's Wake Responsibly campaign as part of the educational piece of our on-water demonstration for all our customers who purchase a boat from Long Lake Marina. This focuses on logical, sensible, and reasonable best practices so all people can enjoy our lakes.

In all, I hope that for the sake of small boating businesses throughout Maine, the committee will vote in opposition to LD 693. Thank you again for your time today and please feel free to follow up with any questions or concerns. If you want to get on the water and for a first-hand experience on how wake surfing can co-exist with other recreational pursuits, don't hesitate to reach out once the ice melts. Just bring a wetsuit!