



Jill C. Duson
Senator, District 27

THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony of Senator Jill Duson introducing *LD 1286, "Resolve, to Establish the Blue Economy Task Force to Support Maine's Emergence as a Center for Blue Economy Innovation and Opportunity in the 21st Century"*

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business
April 11, 2023

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and Distinguished Colleagues on the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business, my name is Jill Duson. I represent Senate District 27, which includes parts of Westbrook and Portland. I am here to present to *LD 1286, "Resolve, to Establish the Blue Economy Task Force to Support Maine's Emergence as a Center for Blue Economy Innovation and Opportunity in the 21st Century,"* for your consideration and speak in favor of its passage.

The Blue Economy refers to the sustainable use of the oceans and coastal areas for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs while preserving the health of our ocean ecosystem. This legislation would create a task force to explore and develop ways to support emerging opportunities and new blue economy initiatives in Maine. This task force would unify thinking across a variety of ocean and seafood economy sectors and a broad range of stakeholders who have been convening and have produced important reports and recommendations aligned with our state's ten year economic plan over the last few years. It would be a mechanism to enable continued focus on this important work and to convene relevant stakeholders to clarify our state's blue economy vision for the future.

The ocean and coastal economies in Maine are vital for our state. Our wild fisheries and aquaculture industries are part of the lifeblood of not just our economy, but of our coastal and island communities. For many of these communities, their jobs aren't simply a way to pay the bills, but are a way of life. As we all envision the future for these important industries, we must take into consideration the impacts of climate change as well as the global movement to look for emerging technology solutions to increase the long term sustainability of our ocean economy. This task force would provide a lens to coordinate thinking around our own blue economy and would ensure that we are supporting these critical communities through the volatility that comes with the climate crisis.

Despite the challenges we are facing due to the impact of climate change on our ocean dependent communities, Maine is having its moment. We have the opportunity to establish our state as an international center for innovation, investment and job growth in our ocean economy through blue economy initiatives and ideas. To achieve this, we must coordinate our efforts and identify shared priorities to attract the investment that will be vital for continued economic development



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in this sector. This task force will identify barriers to attracting investment and help us jointly support pathways for equitable, responsible and efficient growth for the benefit of all.

Maine occupies a unique position in the global ocean economy. Our state provides vital resources for the world and we represent an attractive entry point to US markets for a number of innovative international companies with ocean interests. We must ensure that we are fostering sustainable ways of nurturing and supporting our existing industries while we simultaneously develop a clear framework and pathway for innovators and companies interested in locating their businesses here. Proactively brainstorming and consciously considering blue economy opportunities for our state would directly address this need. At the same time, it's critical that we approach this task force thoughtfully and with sensitivity to the many individuals, institutions, communities and businesses which have a vested interest and are deeply rooted in our ocean economy.

After discussions with a number of key stakeholders and leaders within the administration, we expect to modify the language of this bill and submit an amendment for your consideration during the work session. However, the goal of this legislation remains the same. With support from the University of New England, the Roux Institute, Maine Maritime Academy, the Maine Aquaculture Association, the University of Maine, Maine Venture Fund, Bold Ocean Ventures, Maine & Co., Downeast Institute, and the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, all of who will be speaking today, I see this bill as a platform to continue the great work of a variety of stakeholder initiatives and a pathway to transform our ocean economies and communities for the better.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.