

**TESTIMONY OF BLAINE GRIMES  
IN SUPPORT OF 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  
April 11, 2023**

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business, my name is Blaine Grimes and I am from Cape Elizabeth. I am here today to speak in support of LD 1286.

As the Chief Ventures Officer at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, I lead a team that supports small entrepreneurial companies which are using science and emerging technologies to develop products and services that have the potential to reach large markets and support a more sustainable ocean economy. Over the past three years our team has engaged with over 45 start-up companies and has traveled throughout the US, Canada and Northern Europe in an effort to understand the extraordinary pace of innovation happening in the ocean sector.

The term "Blue Economy" is defined as the sustainable use of the ocean's resources for economic health, improved livelihoods and jobs and ecosystem health. This bill is intended to make Maine a key player in this emerging global trend. Maine needs a Blue Economy strategic plan in order to attract the kind of investment and companies that will grow, innovate, enhance livelihoods statewide, support diverse community structures and create high paying, long term jobs.

Given the excellent work recently done by several other industry-led and multi-stakeholder initiatives (and the important ongoing community work of many dedicated organizations such as the Maine Lobsterman's Association, Maine Coast Fisherman's Association, The Island Institute, Coastal Enterprises, Manomet, and others) Maine is poised to provide an integrated vision and aspiration around our ocean economy. New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Alaska, Florida, California and Washington State are all forming powerful ocean industry clusters to make their states attractive to investors and entrepreneurs alike. Maine has a compelling geographic advantage, industry knowledge, institutional leadership, vested communities and ocean orientation to be a leader in the evolving global ocean economy. What Maine doesn't have yet is a clear strategy and coordinated message.

We need a framework to attract innovation in this sector such as ocean-derived value-added products in consumer goods, biopharmaceutical applications, carbon sequestration and other climate solutions, software products to enhance supply-chain capacity, artificial intelligence applications across all ocean related industries and ocean data analytics for forecasting and modeling. There will be many opportunities over the coming decade for Maine to attract additional federal funding in the context of the "new blue economy". We need to be prepared to compete effectively for those dollars in a way that is coordinated and in the best interest of all stakeholders. We believe that we are at risk of falling behind other states that have recognized this opportunity and that is part of the reason for our interest in supporting this bill.

Over the past few weeks many leaders throughout the state have provided constructive suggestions for changes to the committee structure, timing, and overall objectives of this proposed Blue Economy Task Force to ensure better inclusion, representation of all vested interests and avoid duplication of effort.

We look forward to continuing those discussions with an eye toward offering a suggested amendment at this committee's work session.

We have heard that our objectives are ambitious – yes they are. Maine has an opportunity to take a leadership role in the new blue economy, supporting Maine entrepreneurs, attracting companies to our shores and creating high paid jobs. This bill will put us on the path to accomplishing that goal.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.