

Testimony of the Greater Portland Council of Governments  
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, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business, my name is Paul Johnson.

I am Economic Development Director for the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG), and I am here today to speak on behalf of GPCOG 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*.

GPCOG serves 25 municipal members in Cumberland County, from Sebago Lake to Casco Bay, as well as Saco, Biddeford, Arundel, and Old Orchard Beach through the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS). We deliver transportation, land use, sustainability, and economic development services to our members and their communities.

For over a decade GPCOG has served as the Economic Development District (EDD) for our region, designated by the U.S. Economic Development Administration. As EDD, GPCOG acts as a catalyst and convenor for the region's economy, and as a conduit of federal funding for qualified development projects.

My work involves helping small employers find resources and support to sustain and expand employment in our region, and I work closely with economic development professionals at the local, regional, and state levels.

GPCOG is a proud partner of the Blue Economy. As EDD, we have written several letters in support of grants that are being used today to grow sustainable jobs and investments by Blue Economy employers. And we see great potential in the future of the Blue Economy, connecting a traditional resource-based sector with emerging science, technology, and innovation and supporting new sustainable ventures far into the next century.

LD 1286 seeks to "engage stakeholders, identify barriers and propose policies to attract and support the responsible and efficient growth of the blue economy in Maine," and to "develop a strategy and recommend a specific action plan to accelerate the State's emergence as an important contributor to the sustainable use of the ocean's resources for economic health, improved livelihoods and jobs and ecosystem health."

We believe this is important work. When completed, we look forward to being one of many implementing partners assisting the future growth and development of the Blue Economy in our region, and across the state.

As we prepare a 5-year strategic plan for our region's economy, we intend to include the Blue Economy as a specific opportunity of highest value. We hope you will agree and will pass LD 1286 unanimously so it can go into effect as soon as possible in order to advance this economic sector with great potential for all of Maine.

For all these reasons we urge you to support the passage of LD 1286. Thank you for the opportunity to share our support, and please let me know if I can do anything to advance your work on this legislation.

**Helping communities thrive and prosper in the Greater Portland and Lakes Region**

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