

## Testimony of Jacqueline Weaver

LD 508 public hearing

April 20, 2023

Good afternoon Senator Brenner, Representative Grohoski, and members of the committee. I am Jacqueline Weaver. I live in Gouldsboro. And I am here to speak in favor of LD508.

I am a co-founder of Friends of Schoodic Peninsula. We formed soon after American Aquafarms announced their proposal to build a 120-acre salmon farm in Frenchman Bay. The company—which is made up largely of Norwegian investors—said they wanted to raise 66 million pounds of salmon a year – which would make it the largest salmon farm in North America, if not the world.

To put that number in further perspective, total lobster landings along the coast of Maine last year were 98 million pounds. That's the total for the whole coast.

No one had ever heard of American Aquafarms until Gouldsboro was hit with the news about this project and its mind boggling scale. This was a total stealth operation. By the time we got wind of it... American Aquafarms had already obtained an option on a former lobster processing plant in Prospect Harbor. And they proudly shared drawings of what they said would be a hatchery... salmon processing plant... and waste disposal operation. That site has never been used for anything other than processing of wild caught fish.

We ... as a town.... are still reeling from this more than two and one half years later.

In October 2021... more than 200 people crowded into the Gouldsboro Community Center to vote virtually unanimously to institute a moratorium on any large scale finfish operation in Gouldsboro. And that was at the height of COVID.

We spent about \$20,000 for initial legal counsel.... And now are well on our way to spending an additional \$100,000 the town had to allocate to get help in drafting what was at the time a first of its kind ordinance in Maine.

How did this project get as far as it did without any proper vetting ... on any level? Maine & Company and the Department of Economic Development rolled out the red carpet for a Norwegian company headed up by a man who had served prison time for investor fraud. Were they not aware of this?

We need this bill because we need to take a careful look at who we want to welcome into our state and, in particular, into our communities, especially small towns such as ours that are so ill prepared to deal with a project of this scope and complexity.

The DEP stated that most of the in-water American Aquafarms' operation would be in territory claimed by Gouldsboro. Technically, that might be true. But in reality, it would have a drastic effect on all of our neighbors around the bay.

We don't want any other towns to go through what we have been going through. Please vote yes on LD 508 and have a broadly drawn group look at DEP's permitting laws.