Testimony for LD 1818

An Act Regarding Port Facilities to Offshore Wind Power Projects

James S. Gillway

I thank the committee chairs Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and honorable members of the Labor and Housing Committee for the opportunity to present testimony on LD 1818. I am the Town Manager for the Town of Searsport and former Representative for District 98 representing Winterport, Frankfort, Swanville and Searsport.

The University of Maine has been working for over fifteen years to develop floating offshore wind technology. I have been tracking the progress of this work and engaging with the program for around fourteen years. This interest in the future of floating offshore wind has allowed me to be included in many of the planning initiatives surrounding floating offshore wind. One such committee was The Maine Offshore Wind Roadmap this was an 18-month comprehensive planning process that engaged hundreds of scientists and citizens from multiple disciplines including: energy, economy, fisheries, wildlife, ports and supply chain. The process looked at all aspects of moving forward with floating offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine. In my opinion one of the significant projections relating to floating offshore wind is that it will produce as many as sixty-thousand jobs in Maine. Currently, we are in the process of identifying the best location in the State of Maine to build a port for constructing floating offshore wind platforms through the Offshore Wind Port Advisory Group. The work of this committee should be complete this summer. Concurrent with these two committees, Maine, along with its Northeast coastal neighbors is engaged in a planning process with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) to determine the ideal locations in the Gulf of Maine for commercial scale floating offshore wind to be sited with the least amount of impact to our fisheries and wildlife as informed by the Maine Offshore Wind Roadmap report. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management is currently in the process of conducting a lease for areas of the Gulf of Maine.

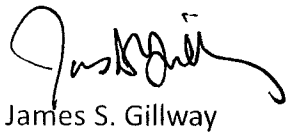
Almost every coastal state on the east coast has been making investments and passing laws to advance the production of offshore wind. Most of this investment has been for fixed bottom offshore wind as the leases for these locations have been awarded and the waters depth will allow for fixed bottom wind.

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management has given preliminary approval to the State of Maine for a research array to be built in approximately fifteen square miles of the Gulf of Maine. We will likely be able to put twelve floating platforms there to study. Knowing this, I am occasionally asked about how this array will inform the larger commercial array if it is being built concurrently. What I have learned over the past decade is that the wind industry is very good at sharing data, and all seem to be moving generally in the same direction of lowering the cost of producing wind energy. We are receiving information from other countries that have small scale and large-scale offshore wind that constantly informs our process.

There have been wind turbines producing energy for over twenty-five years in Europe. We have learned a lot from these projects.

There are themes of the planning processes that are underway or recently completed and to the industry itself and that is that it moves very quickly, and each component informs others. We must move forward too. This bill will help align the State of Maine with the potential future funding sources and people who will be engaged in the construction of the floating platforms. It will advance the concept of clean port technology and prioritize hiring of Mainers from poorer or rural communities. Like other east coast states, we should be doing everything to help this industry move forward in Maine.

Respectfully submitted,



James S. Gillway