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**Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources**

**RE: LD 2003 – An Act to Protect Access to Maine's Intertidal Zone**

Senator Reny, Representative Hepler, Honorable members of the Joint Committee on Marine Resources,

Thank you for this opportunity to address you today. My name is Jake Patryn, and I am the Director of Operations for Acadian Seaplants in Maine. I speak to you as someone deeply rooted in Maine's working waterfront. I was raised on the back of a boat. I grew up lobster fishing, clamming, scalloping, and to this day I remain intimately connected with the ebb and flow of our coastal economy.

Today, we stand at a crossroads, facing challenges that demand our attention. One such challenge is the issue of seaweed harvesting. I want to emphasize the importance of recognizing the economic benefits this industry brings to our state. Sustainable seaweed harvesting not only supports local businesses but also contributes to the resilience of our working waterfront.

Having worked on Maine's shores, I understand firsthand the trials our working waterfront faces from various directions. All vocations relying on Maine's coastline are navigating turbulent waters and unique challenges, and the seaweed harvesting issue is a significant part of this puzzle.

I want to acknowledge the current status of LD2003 and respect the time of this committee. However, I want to stress that the essence of this issue is too crucial to dismiss. The economic impact of the seaweed industry, coupled with its potential to be a part of sustaining our working waterfront, deserves thorough consideration. The voices of those privileged enough to own coastal property should not decide the fate of our working waterfront.

While I have your attention, I feel it's essential to clarify a crucial point in the discussion. Seaweed, indeed, is not a fish, and we don't claim it to be. The heart of the matter lies in the act of harvesting, which falls under the broader definition of fishing. Fishing, as defined, encompasses the endeavor to take or attempt to take any marine organism by any method or means. By classifying seaweed harvesting as fishing, we are not altering the nature of seaweed itself, but recognizing the practice that has and can continue to sustain both our economy and coastal ecosystems.

In closing, I urge you to keep the conversation alive, recognizing the delicate balance we must strike to protect both our environment and the livelihoods that depend on it. Let us continue to address this issue collaboratively, ensuring a future where our working waterfront thrives.

Thank you.