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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

Neither For Nor Against,

LD 2065, *An Act to Amend Maine's Aquaculture Leasing Laws*

February 1, 2024

Senator Reny, Representative Hepler and distinguished members of the Committee on Marine Resources, my name is Amanda Campbell, and I am submitting testimony neither for nor against LD 2065 on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association (MMA), and the 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC), who were elected by their colleagues and peers to determine MMA's position on bills of municipal interest.

Municipal leaders recognize that diversification for local fishermen can provide stability for their families and thereby offer stability for communities. Also recognized is that the waters in which aquaculture leases are granted are managed by the state. What local leaders would ask the committee and department to consider is an increased level of participation by municipal officials in decisions made that impact waters in and around their communities.

Required public hearings are often scheduled without municipal input and at times municipal officials and members of the public are unable to attend. This bill proposes to increase the number of people required to request a hearing, for lease renewals that don't statutorily require one, from five requestors to 25. In communities where the public is already struggling to understand the lease approval and renewal process, this new requirement could all but stifle public engagement. An increased working relationship between the department and municipal officials could assure local residents that whether their concerns are ecological, navigational, or economical, everyone involved with leasing decisions is considering all impacts those decisions will have on the surrounding community.

Thank you for your consideration of the municipal perspective.

If you have any questions regarding MMA's position on this bill, or other bills with municipal impact, please contact me at acampbell@memun.org