

February 2025

To: The Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

RE: LD 173 An Act to Exempt Certain Watercraft from Registration Requirements

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, my name is Stacey Keefer, Director for the Maine Marine Trades Association (MMTA), and a resident of Union. Today I am testifying on behalf of approximately 120 Maine businesses and an industry comprised of boatyards, boat builders, marinas, boat dealers, marine retailers, and more.

The Maine Marine Trades Association is generally opposed to LD 173. Boat registrations provide important funding to the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife which equates to protection for water quality, Maine's native aquatic species, and all boaters. We are concerned that the Department and water quality protection programs need more funding at this time, not less. Boat registrations help the Department understand trends—a known increase in water users via the registration system is an indicator that more resources are needed to support any changes accordingly. Registration numbers are also helpful in tracing watercraft ownership in the cases of vessels found adrift.

The Maine Marine Trades Association would consider supporting and exemption or reduced registration fee for watercraft with propulsion that is equivalent to 5 horsepower or less if the Department was agreeable. Recent trends in electric propulsion have changed recreational boating and water sports. Now there are electric foil boards, surfboards, jetboards, and a portable wand-like "outboard" that can be swapped from boat to boat which could even be used with floating pool toys. Electric motorized fishing kayaks with a pedal-assist option have become popular in recent years and are made here in Maine. There is even such thing as an electric kick board and an increasing number of electrified "pool toys". If the Department agrees that electrified water toys and any watercraft with very low horsepower propulsion should be exempt from registration, we would consider supporting that amendment.

We would be happy to answer any questions now or prior to the work session.

Respectfully,

Stacey Keefer
Maine Marine Trades Association, Executive Director

