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*Testimony of Rep. Allison Hepler presenting
LD 401, An Act to Support Removal of Overboard Discharge Systems
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources*

Good morning, Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. I am Allison Hepler and I represent the towns of Arrowsic, Georgetown, Phippsburg, West Bath and Woolwich. I am here today to present **LD 401, An Act to Support Removal of Overboard Discharge Systems**.

This is a Department bill that may lead to additional removals of overboard discharges (OBDs) along the coast. OBDs are small wastewater treatment systems that discharge to surface water. They are located in certain areas where there is no public sewer system – which is the case in my entire district – and a traditional septic system cannot be installed.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to sponsor LD 401 and want to speak briefly to it, albeit wearing a couple of different hats. First, as a state representative: The towns in my district have 84 overboard discharges, 65 of them in one town. Statewide the number is about 662. I've seen a number of cases where this program has been able to help residents replace OBDs and improve our coastal marine industries. This bill would make it affordable for more residents.

Second, as the House co-chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources: Our committee is tasked with protecting our ocean resources while also maintaining a sustainable fishery. Our committee and indeed, DMR, cannot do it alone, which is why DEP's regulation of pollutants is so important.

Specifically, the presence of an OBD may require that nearby shellfish areas are closed to harvesting. The Department already has a good program to regulate these systems, and this bill will improve the aspects of the program that help to remove OBDs so that closed shellfish areas may be opened.

I understand the DEP has worked closely with the Department of Marine Resources on this issue and with the Shellfish Advisory Council.

And finally, as a longtime selectboard member in my town, Woolwich: As mentioned, I've always appreciated the funding that comes from this state program to help residents replace OBDs. Not only does it improve our coastline's environment but it also may serve to open up shellfish harvesting opportunities in Woolwich that have long been closed.

Brian Kavanah, Director of the Bureau of Water Quality, will testify for the Department and can provide additional information to the committee.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to your committee's careful consideration.