

Legislative Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

Senator Baldacci,

Representative Roberts

Members of the Committee,

My name is Mike Shaw I'm here on behalf of the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine ILA and our thousands of members in our state and beyond.

I am writing to offer my testimony in support of LD-728, an important act that proposes to amend our current laws regarding smelt fishing. I represent a community of dedicated fishermen who value both our traditional practices and the conservation of our water resources.

One of the key provisions of this bill is the right for a fisherman to measure his catch before being suspected of exceeding legal limits. Allowing preemptive and voluntary measurement ensures that our rights are respected and that the process is both transparent and fair. This approach would help eliminate any presumptions of wrongdoing before a catch has even been fully quantified.

Historically, game wardens have relied on established practices where catch limits were verified as fishermen left the waterway. This method has been proven and a fair way to ensure compliance while maintaining the trust between the fishing community and law enforcement officers. By aligning with this time-tested practice, LD-728 reaffirms our commitment to both responsible fishing and due process.

We recognize the importance of sustainable fisheries management and fully support efforts to safeguard our natural resources. At the same time, it is imperative that fishermen are not unduly penalized. We are eager to work collaboratively with the Department to develop guidelines and practices that satisfy the needs of both conservation efforts and the fishing community. A cooperative approach will ensure that the final regulatory framework is balanced, equitable, and effective.

In conclusion, LD-728 represents a critical step toward modernizing our smelt fishing regulations. It acknowledges the rights of fishermen to verify their catch, honors the successful practices of the past, and opens the door for constructive dialogue with all stakeholders. I respectfully urge the Committee to support this act.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mike Shaw

Sportsmans Alliance of Maine ILA