



MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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March 6, 2025 - Testimony in support of LD 336:
An Act to Change the Waiting List System for Commercial Lobster

Good morning, Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler, and members of the Committee on Marine Resources. I appreciate the chance to speak in support of LD 336, "An Act to Change the Waiting List System for Commercial Lobster and Crab Fishing Licenses."

My name is Representative Billy Bob Faulkingham, and I serve as the House Republican Leader. I represent House District 12, which includes the towns of Franklin, Gouldsboro, Hancock, Sorrento, Sullivan, Winter Harbor, and Steuben. This legislation proposes a one-to-one entry ratio for lobster licenses, and I believe it is a necessary and fair change for the future of the lobster industry.

The lobster industry is aging rapidly, and the number of young people entering the fishery has declined significantly. Today, more fishermen are over 40 years old than under 40. If the overall number of fishermen in the industry isn't growing, there's no reason to maintain entry ratios above one-to-one. Keeping these higher ratios creates an unnecessary barrier that prevents hardworking apprentices from gaining full entry into the fishery.

I understand and respect that decisions regarding entry ratios are made at the zone level. However, I believe it's fair to ask: What are the reasons for not adopting a one-to-one ratio? If there are valid concerns, I'd like to hear them. This is a strong and well-managed fishery, and those who have completed their apprenticeship should be able to access it within a reasonable timeframe.

Creating unnecessary obstacles and prolonged wait times does not strengthen our industry—it weakens it. It discourages young people from pursuing a career on the water, harms our coastal economy, and undermines the tradition of passing this way of life down to the next generation. Fishermen have always taken pride in mentoring newcomers who have put in the work. If someone has successfully completed the apprenticeship program and a spot opens up, they should be able to fish.

I stand before you today as someone who was fortunate enough to enter the fishery before limited entry was implemented. I did not have to wait on a list—I simply purchased a license and got to work, just as my father did before me, and his father before him. Knowing that others have been denied that same opportunity has never sat right with me. To me, this is an issue of fairness.

If today is not the right time to make this change, I can accept that. But I would at least like to understand why. And if a one-to-one ratio is not feasible at this time, I urge the committee to explore ways to encourage zones to consider lowering their ratios.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

Billy Bob Faulkingham

Rep. Billy Bob Faulkingham
House Republican Leader