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March 6, 2025

**Public Testimony In Support of LD 489 – An Act to Provide for a Vessel Breakdown License Exception for Commercial Halibut Fishing License Holders**

Presented by Representative Strout of Harrington – District 11

Good morning, Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler and distinguished members of the Marine Resources Committee. I am Representative Tiffany Strout from Harrington, representing the towns of Milbridge, Harrington, Columbia, Columbia Falls, Centerville, Addison, Jonesport, Beals, Jonesboro, Roque Bluffs, Whitneyville and Machias and I am here today to provide testimony in support of LD 489 An Act to Provide for a Vessel Breakdown License Exception for Commercial Halibut Fishing License Holders.

I was approached by a constituent to see if I would put in a bill to address a situation last year that resulted in her missing the 2024 halibut season.

The season for halibut fishing is very short going from sunrise on May 18<sup>th</sup> to sunset on June 13<sup>th</sup>. In addition to the short season, as with other fishing industries, there are regulations to help with sustainability of the industry. Some of these regulations include, a minimum size of 41 inches to keep the fish, the fishery is open access meaning there are no restrictions to obtain a license, you also have to purchase tags, there is a limit of 25 halibut tags per fisherman, the tags must be assigned to a fishing vessel and Atlantic halibut cannot be transferred between vessels.

Last year my constitute was in the process of getting a new motor put in her boat. This project extended into the halibut fishing season resulting in her not being able to fish. Her husband is a commercial fisherman, who also fishes for halibut and there are other family members who fish for halibut, but with the current law she was not able to transfer her tags onto another vessel. The law states only 25 tags can be assigned to any one vessel.

This bill focuses on modifying a few parts of the tagging requirements specifically, all tags must be declared to one vessel, a vessel may have only one license holder's tags assigned to that vessel, vessels may land a maximum of 25 Atlantic halibut per year, it is illegal for more than one type (recreational or commercial) of landing tag to be assigned to any one vessel per year, and no individual may possess more than one type of landing tag per year.

If this bill were to pass, it would provide an opportunity for individuals who may end up overrunning on maintenance for their vessel or if they have a vessel issue that occurs during the halibut season to reach out to the Commissioner of the Department of Marine Resources and ask for a breakdown exception on their vessel. Should the Commissioner grant the waiver, this would allow the fisherman to then assign their tags to another boat, even if that boat has 25 halibut tags already assigned to it.

Other fisheries have something like this in place and this would follow the same approval process as those industries.

Thank you for your time today and I would be glad to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tiffany Strout".

Tiffany Strout  
State Representative

District 11 Addison, Beals, Columbia, Columbia Falls, Harrington, Jonesboro, Jonesport, Machias, Milbridge, Roque Bluffs, Whitneyville, Centerville Township, and North Washington (Part)