

**TESTIMONY OF
Deirdre Gilbert
Department of Marine Resources**

**The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) is testifying
In Support of
LD 489 An Act to Provide for a Vessel Breakdown License Exception for
Commercial Halibut Fishing License Holders
Before the Committee on Marine Resources
Sponsored by Representative Strout
Date of Hearing: March 6, 2025**

Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources, my name is Deirdre Gilbert, I am the Director of State Marine Policy for the Department of Marine Resources and I am testifying on behalf of the Department in support of LD 489.

LD 489 is similar to other bills that this committee has previously addressed on the topic of vessel breakdowns, for such commercial fisheries as scallops, urchins, and menhaden. First, it provides a helpful clarification consistent with other licenses that the license holder's authority to conduct the licensed activities is limited to the vessel listed on the license. In addition, it provides the commissioner with the authority to grant an exception to this limitation, such that a license holder could be authorized to use a vessel other than the vessel listed on their license in the event that the vessel has become temporarily inoperable, because of an accident or mechanical breakdown.

For clarity, at any point, a license holder could contact the Department to have the vessel identified on their license changed to a different vessel. However, for many fisheries, the problem is that the license holder wants to list a vessel that another license holder has already listed, and there is some limitation on the fishery that is applied as a vessel limit. In the case of halibut, no more than 25 tags may be assigned to a specific vessel. Therefore, if your boat breaks down and you want to identify a different vessel that another halibut license holder has already identified, it is likely that there are already 25 tags assigned to that vessel. This exception would allow the commissioner to authorize more than one license holder to list the same vessel when the requirements for the exception are met and therefore, for a limited time, more than 25 tags could be assigned to a single vessel.

At this time, the state halibut season lasts from May 18 to June 13. The proposed legislation would allow for one 2 week waiver, which could be extended by an additional 2 weeks. Therefore, this waiver could be used to cover the entirety of a halibut season. While the Department has no objection to providing the necessary flexibility to allow a license holder to continue to operate, we also want to ensure that these waivers do not become workarounds that are used on an annual basis as a long-term strategy for two license holders to fish from the same vessel. For this reason, we would recommend a further limitation that a breakdown waiver may not be issued in consecutive seasons.

Thank you for your consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.