



Testimony of Maine Labor Climate Council Executive Director, Francis Eanes, in Opposition to LD 226, "An Act to Protect the Cultural Resources and Historical Heritage of Sears Island in Searsport by Extending Conservation Easement Protections" and LD 735, "An Act to Protect Sand Dunes on Sears Island and to Establish Criteria for Legislation Regarding Land Development"

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment & Natural Resources, my name is Francis Eanes and I'm here today to speak in opposition of LD 226 and LD 735. I'm the Executive Director of the Maine Labor Climate Council, a coalition of 20 labor unions here in the state of Maine working together to build good union jobs as our state transitions to clean energy.

Others have spoken quite clearly about why these bills should not pass, so I leave you with just two additional points:

First, it is hard to overemphasize how much of an economic game-changer a port would be for the upper Penobscot region. Many of you recall how when the Bucksport Mill closed just over 10 years ago, it took away 500 good-paying union jobs and 40% of the town's tax base. Go back 20, 30, 40 years and mom out farther up the Penobscot River, and that number gets a whole lot bigger. Building a port to manufacture and launch floating offshore wind foundations means thousands of jobs for decades to come. This means several anchor employers in a region that deserves it, and which lags behind almost every other region in our state in terms of inequality, poverty, and the ability of working class people to support themselves with dignifying work.

Second, and on a related note, some of the supporters of these bills make the claim that "no one in Searsport wants this." This couldn't be farther from the truth. For the last year and a half, our organization, together with partners, has knocked thousands of doors in the upper Penobscot Bay region, including Searsport, and engaged residents in thoughtful conversations about their hopes and concerns for this project. We talk about the jobs and potential opportunities for residents to engage in the planning process, but mostly we just listen. And I can tell you well over half of the people who have come to the door — and we knock every door — are excited about the potential jobs and investment that a port would bring to Searsport and surrounding communities. Without a doubt some folks would prefer that the port be developed at Mack point rather than Sears Island. But like the thousands of working class people that make up the unions in our organization, most Searsport residents understand what it means to have an anchor employer with high-quality jobs in their community, and just want to make sure their town has a real seat at the table along the way. It's for this reason that the Searsport Select Board has not once but twice passed a resolution supporting the potential development of a port, and calling for the State to negotiate a Community Benefits Agreement with the town to maximize benefits and minimize the impacts of this project.

Thank you for your consideration, and please vote Ought Not To Pass.