



MAINE

Lobstermen's Association, Inc.

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Against

LD 851 An Act to Establish a Senior Retiree Lobster License

March 20, 2025

Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler, and members of the Marine Resources Committee, my name is Jarod Bray. I am the Board Chairman of the Maine Lobstermen's Association (MLA). The MLA opposes LD 851 to establish retiree lobster license.

As I testified earlier in March, the MLA is a strong advocate for the zone council process because this system gives lobstermen a voice in local management, working in partnership with the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and the Legislature. Each zone council has invested significant time in controlling effort in their zone.

This is necessary to ensure Maine does not increase its risk to right whales by putting more gear in the water, that fishery does not have more fishing power than the lobster resource can sustain, and ensure that those who are currently lobstering can remain profitable. New federal whale rules will be in place by the end of 2028. Protecting the resource and keeping existing lobstermen whole are becoming more challenging as lobster landings decline.

LD 851 would allow individuals who do not currently hold a Maine lobster license to obtain a retiree license and fish 100 traps. This proposal both undermines the entry program in place in each of the lobster zones and is extremely unfair to all those who are currently in the Apprentice Program, or have completed the Apprentice Program and are now on a zone waiting list until the required number of licenses have been retired.

Unlike many commercial fisheries, there is a path of entry into the Maine lobster fishery. It requires a commitment to learn the fishery and the importance of our conservation program through the Apprentice Program. And for many, it also requires the person to wait to obtain the privilege to fish in order to limit the overall effort in the fishery depending on which zone they plan to fish in. There are many lobstermen who have given up their lobster license over the years and have had to go through the Apprentice Program to get back into the fishery.

The MLA urges you to vote ought not to pass.

Thank you for your consideration.