

The Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development
Testimony of Blaine Grimes, Ocean House Consulting

In Support of LD 1023

LD 1023, Resolve, to Reestablish and Continue the Work of the Maine Blue Economy Task Force

March 27, 2025

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development.

My name is Blaine Grimes. I live in Cape Elizabeth Maine, and I am the President of Ocean House Consulting. For the last twenty years, I served as the Chief Development Officer and Chief Ventures Officer at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute. I was the founder of its Ventures program –the entrepreneurship and innovation division which was built to bridge the gap between the innovative blue economy businesses and the capital, technical knowledge and networks needed to help them grow. I was an early supporter of the formation of the Blue Economy Task Force and served as Co-Chair alongside Charlotte Mace of DECD. I am honored to testify in support of LD 1023.

I am deeply passionate about the opportunity we have to align Maine's inherent capacities in ocean dependent industries with the global macroeconomic trends which are driving the emergence of the blue economy (the need for increased protein production, renewable energy, carbon reduction, coastal resilience strategies, ocean data for decision making and the growing use of AI across all sectors). We have an opportunity which is unlike any we have had for decades – to leverage and modernize our natural resource-based economy in service to a set of global economic drivers. But we are moving too slowly and fragmented in our approach. We are at risk of losing our natural leadership position to other states such as Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Alaska, and Washington State that are coordinating their efforts and acting decisively.

We have a number of “road maps” that relate to the blue economy but we lack a coordinated plan. The Task Force took the time to review each of those road maps and noted all of the duplicative recommendations. There are so many areas of synergy. We need to move forward assertively now under a unified strategy. This will help us attract the investment capital and federal dollars that are currently turning their attention elsewhere.

Maine already has a global brand for quality. We have an extraordinary opportunity given our location anchoring the eastern side of the North Atlantic, our maritime heritage, inherent know how, our research capacity and the diversity of our blue economy activities in Maine, to lead the country in several unique blue economy sectors –specifically: marine

biotechnology, ocean data/predictive modeling and forecasting, resilient infrastructure work and sustainable boatbuilding/marine electrification.

The task force members are collectively aligned in our aspirations for the state. We do have a number of challenges to overcome (including the need to attract substantial investment, talent and provide adequate housing), but the opportunity is absolutely clear.

I'd ask the committee to support the passage of LD1023- which will allow us to continue the work of the task force, to refine the business structure and operating plan for a statewide Center of Blue Economy, focus on the needs of our R&D community, consider the workforce development and training needs that will necessarily go along with such a focused effort and determine the funding necessary to achieve this goal.

Blaine S. Olsen
207-831-7794