

The Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development
Testimony of Rhiannon Hampson, Gulf of Maine Research Institute

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 Rhiannon Hampson, I serve as the Vice President for Economic
Development at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI), and I am here today on
behalf of our organization in support of LD 1023.

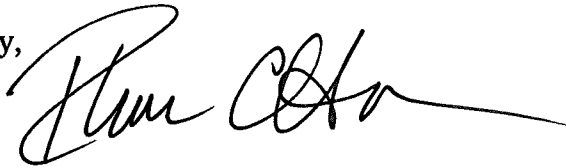
GMRI strives to bring collaborative solutions to global ocean challenges, and in practice that includes identifying place-based opportunities to support leadership in the Blue Economy. What does that look like for Mainers? It looks like standing up a first of its kind apprenticeship program for the sustainable aquaculture industry, in partnership with MAA (Maine Aquaculture Association) and the state's community colleges; it looks like our Ventures team offering data-informed development for innovations that address climate resilience, in collaboration with MTI (Maine Technology Institute) and Island Institute, among others; it's leading a coalition to explore how best to protect working waterfronts to accommodate both historical uses while capitalizing on emergent opportunities. These shared efforts grow naturally here in Maine, but there remains untapped potential to better leverage the expertise and resources among our organizations — and the Blue Economy Task Force (BETF) is well-positioned to serve as a navigator for that work.

GMRI recognizes that our coastal communities have immediate needs to be addressed, such as affordable housing and mitigating the increasing damage from severe storms. We believe there is the simultaneous need to identify sustainable growth opportunities; Maine's ~3,500 miles of coastline is heavily pressured, and full participation in the Blue Economy will allow us to build on our proud working waterfront heritage, and the abundance of our natural resources to meet this moment.

Among the challenges identified in the BETF report is the fragmented strategy for growing Maine's Blue Economy. The potential for Maine to take the reins will be more fully realized when informed by the work of the BETF; having a dedicated team to scope state-wide community identified needs, aggregate information on the efforts of organizations, and develop a comprehensive plan for implementation will be invaluable. The BETF report also references previous state of Maine policies and reports, recommending ways in which those can be operationalized – giving additional value to that work and helping to bring those solutions into focus for this purpose.

GMRI sees the work of coordinating industry and partner organizations, giving voice to communities, and identifying opportunities as being a shared responsibility and priority for all of Maine. The ability of the BETF to further identify actions that will drive Maine's leadership in the Blue Economy is critical to this effort, and GMRI is eager to continue and grow our participation in the Task Force. We therefore urge the Committee to support LD 1023.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rhiannon Hampson", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Rhiannon Hampson
Vice President for Economic Development
Gulf of Maine Research Institute