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Testimony of Representative Morgan Rielly in support of
LD 1023, Resolve, to Reestablish and Continue the Work of the Blue Economy Task Force
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development

Good afternoon, Senator Curry, Representative Gere and distinguished members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee. My name is Morgan Rielly, and I have the honor of representing House District 127, which includes a portion of Westbrook. I'm here in support of **LD 1023, Resolve, to Reestablish and Continue the Work of the Blue Economy Task Force.**

As defined by the Task Force, Maine's blue economy is "a sustainable and equitable ocean economy that optimizes innovation to expand economic opportunities in our coastal communities and to solve pressing societal needs. It is grounded in Maine's unique marine heritage, research expertise, and location."

Outside of the legislature, I've had experience working in aquaculture, a key component of Maine's blue economy, on oyster farms in Casco Bay. Oyster farming has been an incredible opportunity to find meaningful work that has connected me with nature's bounty and beauty. There is no better feeling and no better way to end a good day than breathing in the smell of ocean-salted air and getting a little mud on your sleeves, being surrounded by people who you enjoy, and knowing the food you harvest will nourish your community.

Aquaculture provides young people with the opportunity to nourish their community and play a role in addressing the climate crisis. When we talk about green jobs, we often focus on clean energy. But addressing climate issues also means addressing the energy that fuels us. We need food that is sustainable, nutritious, grown locally, and promotes healthy ecosystems.

But aquaculture is just one of the many opportunities in our blue economy. There is so much potential for our state when it comes to growing our blue economy: commercial fishing, boat building, and marine bioscience to name just a few. It will provide jobs that support our maritime

heritage, that pay well, that have the potential to nourish and heal us, and that give us a sense of purpose.

The report this committee has received is a good first step. We now need action to make this vision a possibility. The State, through the task force, must look further into how we can establish a center, center research and development across state agencies, and tap into private and public monies to grow our blue economy.

Thank you so much for your time. I urge you to pass **LD 1023**.