

**TESTIMONY OF
Deirdre Gilbert
Department of Marine Resources**

**The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) is testifying
In Opposition to
LD 968 Resolve, to Study Stakeholder Input Involving the Appointment of
the Commissioner of Marine Resources
Before the Committee on Marine Resources
Sponsored by Representative Golek
Date of Hearing: March 27, 2025**

Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources, my name is Deirdre Gilbert, Director of State Marine Policy for the Department of Marine Resources, and I am testifying on behalf of the Department in opposition to LD 968.

LD 968 is a Resolve directing the Department of Marine Resources to study the level of stakeholder input from certain fisheries and the aquaculture industry involved in the appointment of the Commissioner of Marine Resources, and how that input may be expanded. The department is required to submit a report by December 3, 2025 to the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources, which may submit legislation related to the report to the Second Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature.

Maine is unusual on the east coast in that its Department of Marine Resources is a cabinet-level agency. In most other states, Marine Resources is often located within a larger environmental agency (e.g. a Department of Environmental Resources) or combined with other resource management (e.g. a Department of Fish and Game). A stand alone agency reflects the economic and cultural importance of marine resources to our state, and means that Marine Resources issues have the same level of discussion and prominence in the Governor's Cabinet as other issues affecting our state.

The selection of a prospective Cabinet member is the prerogative of the Governor, subject to review by the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources, and confirmation by the Maine Legislature. In practice, new Governors typically assemble a "transition team" that helps them to identify prospective candidates to hold those roles. Although not required, new Governors and their transition teams often meet with industry associations to help inform who they might advance in these positions. As mentioned above, once selected, a prospective Commissioner must undergo a hearing in this committee where any member of the public may speak for or against their confirmation.

While the Resolve contemplates exploring out to expand input from a variety of commercial fisheries and the aquaculture sector, it does not include other stakeholders such as recreational fishermen, or members of the public who have an interest in Maine's marine resources. The Commissioner of Marine Resources does not work on behalf of just the commercial sectors, but all Maine citizens. The current system allows for equitable input into that final decision. It is unlikely that a study on how to collect additional input from commercial sectors could be translated into legislation that would affect a

future Governor's decision-making process. For these reasons, the Department does not support the use of limited Department resources to conduct such a study.

Thank you for your consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.