

To: Members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

From: Clinton Thompson, Brunswick ME

Re: Comments in support of LD 1042

Members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, my name is Clinton Thompson, and I reside in Brunswick. I am originally from Eastport. From a young age I have always been around the water and engaged in all manners of recreational boating activity. My professional boating experiences started in high school and while attending Unity College. During those years I worked in the salmon aquaculture industry. After graduating from college, I was employed as a Maine Marine Patrol Officer for 25 years until my retirement in 2023 and you all know what that entailed. I am currently employed as the Marine Operations Manager at Bowdoin College. At Bowdoin I am responsible for the oversight and operation of Bowdoin vessels. I work with all programs operating vessels including the Schiller Coastal Studies Center (Orr's Island), the Biology Department, the Earth and Oceanographic Science Department, the Bowdoin Scientific Station at Kent Island (Bay of Fundy, NB), and the sailing and crew teams within the Athletic Department. I am also a relief/part time charter boat Captain for a company along the mid-coast. I currently hold a 50-ton Master, Near Coastal (out to 200 nautical miles) Merchant Mariner Credential (Captain's License) also I am licensed as a Maine hunting and fishing guide. I point out my experience to show that I have been involved with PFDs in many capacities for my entire life.

I cannot give you a statistic that will indicate how many lives are saved by wearing a PFD, just like the number of lives are saved by prohibiting texting while driving is unknown. You may hear testimony today that there are no recorded boating related drownings involving children in this age group. The absence of this data is fantastic.

I can however tell you that over my 25 years in the Marine Patrol I was involved in the recovery of many, many of bodies that ended up in the water. Of all those recoveries exactly zero of the victims were wearing a PFD. Additionally, during my DMR career I was involved only once in an in the water rescue where an individual (s) was wearing a PFD. The conclusion I draw is that folks that end up in the water while wearing a PFD generally do not die and do not often need help.

I will close with an account of an incident. In August 2018ish I was dispatched to Hermit Island, Phippsburg (a campground) for a report of two children who had gone out in kayaks and had been missing for some time. I met with the mother, who was unable to speak English. I did not have to be fluent in Korean to understand she was unconsolably

distraught about the situation. Understandably so. Bystanders told me about the children, and I was relieved to learn **they were wearing PFD's.**

At the time of this incident the wind was blowing from the south at 20 knots (a lot for a kid in a kayak) the tide was coming in and the water was about as warm as it was ever going to get along the coast of Maine. My co-workers were working on the situation, the Coast Guard was on the way and the local firefighters were on it. I knew, **if the information regarding the children wearing PFDs** was correct, given the conditions at the time as well as the personnel present that the situation should end positively if wrapped up within a couple of hours.

On that day I observed a mother experiencing indescribable sheer terror. The next hour I observed her experience the greatest relief and love when those two children were returned to her, soaking wet with **PFDs in hand.**

There are few things in life that I can say with 100% certainty but wearing a PFD saves lives. Not simply having it on board, wearing it. This is undisputable and for that reason I ask you to support this very small change proposed in LD 1042.

Regards,

Clinton Thompson