



**MAINE
AQUACULTURE
ASSOCIATION**

April 9, 2025

The Honorable Margaret Rotundo, Senate Chair
The Honorable Drew Gattine, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
State House, Room 228
Augusta, ME. 04333

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Honorable members of the Joint Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs :

My name is Sebastian Belle and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Aquaculture Association (MAA). The MAA is the oldest state aquaculture association in the country. We represent Maine's aquatic farmers that raise finfish, shellfish and sea vegetables. Our farmers annually produce over 100 million dollars in farm gate revenue and directly employ roughly 700 Maine citizens year-round. We purchase goods and services from over 400 Maine businesses and our total economic impact is roughly 150 million dollars annually.

I stand before you today, to testify in support of LD 506 "An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue for Research and Development and Commercialization". Aquaculture is the only marine resource based sector that has demonstrated consistent growth in Maine over the last twenty years. One reason for that growth is that the State has made some strategic investments in R&D during that same period. Those investments resulted in the commercialization of products, goods and services fundamental to the sector's growth and commercial viability. Many of those investments were at levels that no individual Maine company would have been able to make themselves. As an ex MITI board member, I personally saw how the translation of research directly into commercialization drives economic development and results in payback to the state at levels many times higher than the original investment. LD 506 continues those efforts and represents a wise investment in the state's future. Please vote OUGHT TO PASS on LD 506.

Thank you for your attention, I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "S. Belle". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Sebastian M. Belle
Executive Director