



MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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April 17, 2025 - Testimony in support of LD 1353:

"An Act Regarding Required Landings in the Menhaden Fishery"

Good afternoon Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Representative Billy Bob Faulkingham, and I serve as the House Republican Leader. I represent House District 12, which includes Franklin, Gouldsboro, Hancock, Sorrento, Sullivan, Winter Harbor, and Steuben.

I'm here today to testify in support of **LD 1353 – "An Act Regarding Required Landings in the Menhaden Fishery."** This bill offers a fair and narrowly tailored pathway for experienced menhaden fishermen to maintain access to the fishery in 2026, even if they did not hold a license in the immediate prior year.

As it stands, current law restricts license eligibility to individuals who held one the previous year. While intended to help manage the fishery, this one-size-fits-all approach can unfairly disqualify fishermen who were active in the fishery in recent years but missed a season due to circumstances beyond their control, such as illness, boat repairs, or shifting bait demand.

LD 1353 fixes this by allowing eligibility in 2026 for fishermen who:

- Landed at least 20,000 lbs. of menhaden in any one of the years between 2019–2022; and
- held a commercial menhaden license in at least two of those years.

This is a targeted exception that rewards legitimate participation without opening the door to new entrants or undermining our marine conservation goals.

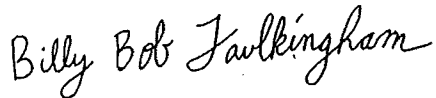
The Atlantic menhaden is both ecologically critical, as forage for striped bass, bluefish, and marine mammals, and economically vital as a bait source for Maine's lobster fishery, reducing our reliance on imported bait. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) manages the species under a quota system, and Maine has been a consistent and compliant partner in that effort.

Unfortunately, the current carryover rule threatens to shut out the very fishermen who helped build this fishery, individuals who have demonstrated sustained, responsible activity but missed one qualifying year.

LD 1353 maintains DMR's authority, keeps quota and reporting safeguards intact, and creates a limited exception based on performance, not preference. It supports working fishermen, protects the critical bait supply for our lobster industry, and ensures this fishery remains local and sustainable.

For coastal communities like those I represent, this is about more than numbers. It's about protecting livelihoods, honoring hard work, and keeping Maine's working waterfront healthy and strong. I respectfully urge the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1353. Thank you for your time and your commitment to Maine's fisheries.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Billy Bob Faulkingham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rep. Billy Bob Faulkingham
House Republican Leader