

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

**The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) is testifying
In Opposition to
LD 1353 An Act Regarding Required Landings in the Menhaden Fishery
Before the Committee on Marine Resources
Sponsored by Representative Faulkingham
Date of Hearing: April 17, 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 DMR and I am testifying on behalf of the Department in opposition to LD 1353.

Eligibility criteria for commercial menhaden licenses were first established ahead of the 2023 licensing year. In order to be eligible for a 2023 license, harvesters needed to meet both a licensing standard (having been licensed for 2 years in 2019, 2020, and 2021) as well as a landings criteria (at least 25,000 lbs of landings in any of those years). The Department bill was amended in committee to expand participation by allowing individuals to meet the landings criteria in the 2022 fishing season. In the subsequent session, participation was expanded further, to allow having held a 2022 license to qualify as one of the two licensing years.

LD 1353 would further expand participation, by lowering the landings criteria from 25,000 to 20,000 lbs, as well as allowing license holders to submit qualifying landings from as far back as 2019 until January 1, 2026.

DMR can analyze the effect of lowering the landings criteria from 25,000 to 20,000 lbs with regard to landings that have previously been submitted, and there are at least 20 more individuals who would become eligible for a license in 2026. However, the provision of the bill that allows a license holder to submit landings from 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022 until January 1, 2026 is far more difficult to assess and much more concerning.

While some menhaden is sold through dealers, many sales are also through the harvester to the end user, so there is no corresponding dealer record to verify the validity of a harvester report. The opportunity to report landings from over 5 years ago in order to qualify for a license would reward those individuals who are willing to falsify those reports and the Department would have nothing to dispute any records received.

As the Department has explained in previous legislation, DMR does not think it is advisable to keep altering the eligibility criteria for commercial menhaden licenses to continue to allow new subsets of prior license holders in. Because of the opportunity to achieve the landings requirement of 25,000 lbs in 2022, anyone who wanted this license has already had the opportunity to meet that very modest threshold. A broad opportunity to submit reports from seasons going back over 5 years could also

mean that Maine's quota is shown to have been exceeded, which could damage our standing with other states. For these reasons, we urge you to vote ought not to pass on LD 1353.

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