



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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*Testimony of Rep. Cheryl Golek introducing*

## **LD 1503, An Act to Create a Green Crab Only Wholesale Dealer License**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources*

Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources, my name is Cheryl Golek, and I represent House District 99, which includes Harpswell and part of Brunswick. I am here today to present **LD 1503, An Act to Create a Green Crab Only Wholesale Dealer License**.

I am confident that everyone on this committee understands the severe damage inflicted on our coastal environment by green crabs. In Maine, these invasive creatures pose a profound threat, particularly to our soft-shell clam industry, eelgrass beds and salt marshes. They devastate clam populations, obliterate vital habitats and accelerate coastal erosion – all of which compromise water quality and threaten the overall health of the Gulf of Maine ecosystem.

Having lived in my cove for over 30 years, I have witnessed this destruction firsthand. Once thriving with mussels, clams, razor clams and oysters, this area has seen a tragic decline in just three short years. While I am encouraged to see that eelgrass is slowly returning, I can confidently say that I haven't spotted a single mussel in my cove for over 7 years, and the familiar presence of clam diggers has vanished from our shores.

When I received an email from Chair Hepler regarding the proposal for a green crab wholesale license, I eagerly stepped up to sponsor it. I am grateful to John Painter of Lewiston for his request to create this legislation.

Together, we can take decisive action to combat the green crab invasion that threatens our waters. Green crabs are now prevalent in large numbers, and it's clear that they're here to stay. However, they also represent an underutilized resource that we must harness. The current green crab fishery in Maine is underdeveloped, relying heavily on individual fishermen who bear the burden of locating and delivering their catch to buyers. This fragmented approach stifles the industry's potential for growth and limits opportunities for those willing to harvest this invasive species.

District 99: Brunswick (Part), Harpswell

By establishing a green crab-only wholesale dealer license, we can create a viable market for green crabs, allowing businesses to purchase from multiple fishermen and distribute the product statewide.

LD 1503 aims to establish a green crab-only wholesale dealer license that will empower license holders to engage in wholesale trade –buying, selling, processing, shipping or transporting green crabs directly from our harvesters. Under current law, such activities are tied to a wholesale seafood license with a hefty minimum fee of \$192.75. In contrast, the proposed fee for a green crab-only wholesale dealer license is a mere \$50, promoting accessibility for aspiring dealers.

Importantly, the bill also incorporates stringent measures to ensure compliance. Individuals operating without the appropriate permit may face penalties outlined by the Department of Marine Resources, which retains the authority to suspend or revoke licenses when necessary. Furthermore, the bill includes a necessary sunset provision, set to repeal the legislation on Jan. 1, 2031. In the meantime, the department will conduct a thorough review of the effectiveness of the green crab-only wholesale dealer license and deliver a comprehensive report to the 134th Legislature in 2030, along with recommendations for its future.

LD 1503 represents a pivotal opportunity to confront our green crab invasion effectively while simultaneously bolstering our economy and supporting our working waterfront. Let us act decisively for the sake of our environment and our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration of the bill before you. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.