

Testimony in support of LD 1336, An Act to Establish the Maine-Aomori Sister-state Advisory Council

Senator Curry, Representative Gere and members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Don Hudson, retired President of Chewonki in Wiscasset, and a resident of Arrowsic. I've been a member of the Maine Aomori Sister State Advisory Council since 2010, having been duly appointed by Governors Baldacci, LePage and Mills. I currently serve as the Acting Chair of the Council.

Friend and colleague Don Nicoll introduced me to the Maine Aomori sister state relationship in March 2010 when he visited Chewonki with a delegation of energy planners from Aomori Prefecture. The delegation was interested in seeing how institutions in Maine were dealing with issues of energy efficiency and overall energy use.

At the close of the visit and tour of our facilities, Don suggested that I join the Maine delegation scheduled to travel to Japan in October 2010. And so it began!

Our visit in 2010 had three purposes: to encourage and support educational exchanges, to explore aquaculture in Aomori, and to explore large-scale renewable energy efforts in the prefecture. Members of our delegation visited a marine biology research facility as well as the North Japan Research Institute for Sustainable Energy (NJRISE) at Hirosaki University. When we returned to Maine, we set in motion a return visit of NJRISE to the Maine Tidal Power Project at the University of Maine in Orono, and several of us also began regular 'virtual' exchanges with Aomori friends and colleagues working in scallop aquaculture. The visit to UMO was followed by visits in 2012 and 2013 and a formal collaborative agreement between Hirosaki University and the University of Maine, focused on ocean energy, as well as a pilot project using Ocean Renewable Power Company's tidal current turbines in Muzu Bay, Aomori.

Suffice it to say, the scallop collaboration has taken off in Maine, and fellow MASSAC member Hugh Cowperthwaite will highlight the 2016 delegation visit co-led by MASSAC, CEI, and U Maine Sea Grant Extension.

It goes without saying that the educational and cultural exchanges, exemplified by the Maine Aomori Print Society projects over the past decade, provide opportunities for Maine people—especially students—to have a first-hand experience with Japanese culture and people. The Maine Aomori collaboration is one of Maine's most abiding international relationships. Triggered by tragedy, it has survived since October 1889—through the turmoil of global war, nurtured by individuals and communities, and for the past 30 years by our state and prefectural governments.

If this legislation moves forward, the Maine Aomori relationship will move back to the Maine International Trade Center where it began informally in 1995, but this time with the authority of statute, a modest budget, and the assistance of the Friends of Aomori. Lessons learned over the years by Maine students and teachers, artists, marine biologists, fishermen, renewable energy engineers and scientists can certainly inform all Maine's international exchanges.

I am happy to answer any questions you might have.