

Testimony on LD 1336, An Act to Establish the Maine-Aomori Sister-state Advisory Council
Presented by Dana Morse, Maine Sea Grant and University of Maine Cooperative Extension
April 24, 2024

Dear Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and Members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee.

My name is Dana Morse. I have a joint appointment with the Maine Sea Grant College Program, and with University of Maine Cooperative Extension. My position is Senior Extension Program Manager, Aquaculture Lead. In this role, I undertake education, research, outreach and technology transfer to strengthen and grow Maine's marine economy and it is with this experience that I write to share my observations on the Maine Aomori Sister State Advisory Council (MASSAC).

What I can tell you is this: the MASSAC has had a real impact on my professional work, and has been central to the development of industry and science related to sea scallops, squid and now urchins as well. My first involvement lay back in 1999, when I participated in a trip to Aomori Prefecture as part of a delegation from Maine, to study first-hand their techniques of scallop spat collection, stock enhancement, processing and to some degree- aquaculture. That exposure, learning and suite of professional connections bore fruit not only over the next years as Maine saw a very active network of fishermen and scientists deploying spat collectors and doing re-seeding work, but it laid the foundation for what is now a small-but-growing sea scallop aquaculture sector right here in Maine; the only one in the United States.

Since then, MASSAC has supported other exchanges, all of which have created concrete results. We have imported first-of-its kind-in-the-US machinery for scallop farming, and have used Japanese experience and knowledge to support the expansion of scallop farming in Maine, with landings now at about \$1 million over the last 4 years. The exchanges have directly influenced the markets and products we now sell (and can expand into) as our culture sector grows. Moreover, there are now growing fields of research into the confluence of oceanography and biology that have benefits both in the fishery and culture sectors, and our young scientists and growers are better trained right out of the gate as a result. Our relationships with Japanese experts and equipment suppliers means that our access to technical knowledge is exceptional; and has paid off not only here in Maine for scallops, seaweed and urchins, but also to our south for the squid industry.

Lastly, we have only begun to scratch the surface of the opportunities in other culinary uses of scallops, such as we have learned in Japan, opportunities which are enormous, considering the nearly \$1billion market in the US for scallop meats alone, and not counting any value-added products.

I offer these brief remarks as a snapshot of what the MASSAC has supported in the past, and how the activity of this group has resulted in benefits to Mainers and our overall economy. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony and I look forward to answering your questions.

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