

Testimony of Shey Conover
Joint Standing Committee on Transportation
In FAVOR of
LD 947, An Act To Clarify Overnight Docking At Mainland Ports For Certain Island Ferry Vessels
LD 1231, An Act Requiring Ferries To Dock Overnight On Certain Islands For Emergency
Purposes

April 29, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, I am Shey Conover a resident of Islesboro for over twenty years and currently chair of the Town Selectboard. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, in support of **LD's 947 and LD 1231**, two bills to clarify the overnight berthing of the ferry, essential to the continued sustainability of our community.

Both bills address the grave concerns we have about the recent proposal from the Department of Transportation to change long-standing operations and move overnight berthing to the mainland. Island communities and the DOT share a common goal. We want safe, reliable transportation to our communities delivered as affordably as possible. We also cannot overstate the importance of the ferry's current role when needed in providing after-hour emergency transport or for providing access to mutual aid equipment in the event of a fire or other major emergency. This important role has been recognized by DOT, notably in federal grant applications for planning for the replacement of the Margaret Chase Smith, the vessel which usually services Islesboro.

These bills prioritize overnight ferry availability for emergency response on the islands, while allowing for necessary operational flexibility. Changing where the ferries are berthed overnight is a complex decision that requires significant discussion and planning to ensure it would actually achieve the goal of improving the reliability and affordability of operating the Maine State Ferry Service. Any such change should be major substantive in regulation. I have provided separate testimony in support of LD 1731, but increasing the influence of the Maine State Ferry Service Advisory Board, along with support for these two bills would ensure island communities are substantially involved in understanding and evaluating the impact of any proposal to change the current berthing practice.

Reliable ferry service is critical public infrastructure for our rural community. For that reason, I respectfully ask you to support LD 947 and LD 1231.