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April 29, 2025

*Testimony of Rep Ann Matlack, introducing*

### **LD 947, An Act to Clarify Overnight Docking at Mainland Ports for Certain Island Ferry Vessels**

*Before the Transportation Committee*

Good afternoon, Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and respected colleagues on the Transportation Committee. My name is Ann Matlack and I represent House District 43, which includes the communities of Cushing, Thomaston, South Thomaston, St George and part of Owls Head. I am here today to present LD 947, An Act to Clarify Overnight Docking at Mainland Ports for Certain Island Ferry Vessels.

Prior to becoming a Legislator, the idea of the Maine Ferry Service leaving ferries on the islands overnight seemed to be a reasonable situation. The ferries remained on the islands to ensure prompt response to emergencies and to provide transportation first thing in the morning for people who work on the mainland or attend school there. However, I was told this was not the case and that the reason was just tradition. After hearing proposals to move ferries to the mainland and the reasoning for this, I still believe my original impressions are valid.

I believe Maine ferries, under most situations, should remain on the islands due to their crucial role in emergency response and their importance to island communities' economic and social well-being. Overnight berthing on islands allows for quicker responses to medical emergencies, and the ferries serve as a vital lifeline for transportation, access to jobs and education, essential goods and services, and access to medical care for chronic conditions.

Additionally, providing accommodations on the islands allows ferry crews to remain in their communities during their time off. Requiring that crews live within a certain distance of their job site, ie, the ferry terminal, as do most Department of Transportation positions, would make it untenable for those who do not currently reside in these communities. Housing in areas such as Bass Harbor, Lincolnville and Rockland is pricey to buy or rent. Providing housing on the islands is beneficial to both the crews and the ferry service.

I have attached an amendment to my original bill, strengthening the provisions calling for ferries to remain on the islands unless there is a legitimate safety concern, and making any rules adopted to implement this bill major substantive.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 23 MRSA §4401, sub-§1 is enacted to read:

1. Overnight docking on islands of ferry vessels. The Department of Transportation shall prioritize docking a ferry vessel operating under this section overnight at its island port when that docking is common practice.

Sec. 2. 23 MRSA §4401, sub-§2 is enacted to read:

2. Exception. Notwithstanding subsection 1, the Department of Transportation may require a ferry vessel to dock at a mainland port or at an alternative island port for an emergency situation, including, but not limited to, an extreme weather event.

Sec. 3. 23 MRSA §4401, as amended by PL 1999, c. 20, §1, is further amended by enacting at the end a new paragraph to read:

The department may adopt rules necessary to implement this section. Rules adopted pursuant to this section are major substantive rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

#### SUMMARY

This bill requires the Department of Transportation to allow a ferry operated by the Maine State Ferry Service to dock overnight at its island port or to dock at a mainland port when that docking is common practice, with the exception that the department may require a ferry vessel to dock at a mainland port or at an alternative island port for an emergency situation, including, but not limited to, an extreme weather event.