



MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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April 29, 2025 - Testimony in support of LD 1231:

"An Act Requiring Ferries to Dock Overnight on Certain Islands for Emergency Purposes"

Good afternoon, Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and members of the Joint Committee on Transportation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Representative Billy Bob Faulkingham, and I serve as the House Republican Leader. I represent House District 12, which includes the towns of Franklin, Gouldsboro, Hancock, Sorrento, Sullivan, Winter Harbor, and Steuben. I am here today to present testimony on my proposed legislation, ***LD 1231, An Act Requiring Ferries to Dock Overnight on Certain Islands for Emergency Purposes.***

This bill directs the Department of Transportation to require the Maine State Ferry Service to nightly dock a ferry vessel that carries vehicles overnight in the towns of Swan's Island, Vinalhaven, North Haven, and Islesboro, to ensure availability for emergency medical, fire, and law enforcement needs, as well as for mass evacuation purposes if needed.

Maine's island communities are unique, and their residents are known for being independent, resilient, and resourceful. However, like all communities, they deserve equal access to essential services that help protect public safety and health, especially in times of crisis. Currently, island residents rely heavily on ferry services to connect them to the mainland for essential medical services, to conduct business, and to ensure public safety. However, there are limitations during emergencies when timely access to services is most critical.

On the islands of Swan's Island, Vinalhaven, North Haven, and Islesboro, residents often face significant delays when seeking emergency medical care. The delays in ferry service can be life-threatening, particularly for patients requiring urgent care or transport to hospitals on the mainland. The proposed legislation would address this by ensuring that ferry services are available around the clock, enabling emergency vehicles to be transported efficiently to and from the islands when the need arises, particularly for critical care such as heart attacks, strokes, and trauma injuries.

Island communities often face heightened risks in the event of fire outbreaks or law enforcement emergencies due to limited resources and delayed responses from the mainland. For example, a 2017 fire on Vinalhaven resulted in a delay of nearly three hours for essential firefighting equipment to be transported by ferry from the mainland. This delay could have been mitigated if the ferry service had docked overnight, enabling quicker mobilization of emergency response teams.

While we hope never to face a natural disaster or emergency that would require mass evacuation, it is essential to be prepared. These Islands are particularly vulnerable to being cut off from the mainland during severe weather, and delays in ferry access can significantly impede timely evacuation in cases of fires, storms, or other disaster situations.

In conclusion, **LD 1231, “An Act Requiring Ferries to Dock Overnight on Certain Islands for Emergency Purposes,”** will ensure that the residents of Swan’s Island, Vinalhaven, North Haven, and Islesboro are afforded the same access to emergency services that mainland residents enjoy. This bill will save lives, provide essential services more efficiently, and make sure our island communities are equipped with the tools they need to handle emergencies swiftly and safely.

I ask for your support in advancing this important legislation to safeguard the health, safety, and well-being of Maine’s island residents. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Billy Bob Faulkingham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rep. Billy Bob Faulkingham
House Republican Leader