



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Representative Holly Eaton in Support of
LD 1268: An Act to Address Employee Recruitment and Retention Issues
Within the Maine State Ferry Service by Providing a Yearly Stipend
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and members of the Transportation Committee, my name is Holly Eaton, and I represent House District 15, which includes Deer Isle, Stonington, Isle au Haut, Frenchboro, Swan's Island, Vinalhaven, Brooklin, Tremont, and Southwest Harbor. I am pleased to testify in support of LD 1268.

Reliable ferry service is critical to the survival and success of the island communities I represent. It connects residents to medical care, education, employment, and the basic goods and services that sustain year-round island life. When ferry runs are canceled or disrupted because of staffing shortages, it is not just an inconvenience — it creates real hardship for families, businesses, and entire communities.

LD 1268 takes a proactive and practical approach by offering a yearly stipend to Maine State Ferry Service employees based on hours worked. This incentive is an investment in the stability and consistency of ferry operations. By helping to recruit and retain skilled workers, the Department can better ensure that service schedules are met, disruptions are minimized, and island communities can continue to depend on the ferry system for their essential needs.

Importantly, this stipend is structured in a way that rewards employees for their actual service and dedication, and it does so without passing additional costs onto ferry riders.

For islands like Swans Island, Frenchboro, and Vinalhaven — and all the communities that rely on the Maine State Ferry Service — strengthening our workforce is key to strengthening our transportation lifeline. LD 1268 moves us toward that goal.

I respectfully urge the committee to support LD 1268. Thank you for your time and consideration, and I am happy to answer any questions.

District 15: Brooklin, Deer Isle, Eagle Island Township, Frenchboro, Southwest Harbor, Stonington, Swan's Island, Tremont, Isle au Haut, Vinalhaven