



April 29, 2025

To: Senator Tim Nangle (Chair)
Committee on Transportation
Maine Senate and Maine House of Representatives
2 and 3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Re: **LD 1477 “An Act to Provide an Exception From Pilotage Requirements for Ferry Service Between Bar Harbor, Maine and Yarmouth, Nova Scotia”**

Dear Committee Chair Senator Tim Nangle and Members of the Transportation Committee:

My name is Carrie Norton, I am the Chair of the Maine Pilotage Commission. On behalf of the Maine Pilotage Commission, I am testifying before you today to express the commission’s strong opposition to Legislative Document 1477 (LD 1477), "An act to provide an exemption from pilotage requirements for passenger ferry service between Bar Harbor, Maine, and Yarmouth, Nova Scotia."

The commission currently oversees 10 pilotage routes throughout the state and provides a system of state pilotage that offers maximum safety from the dangers of navigation for vessels entering or leaving the waters of the State of Maine. The Commission provides high standards for proficiency and oversight for its licensed pilots, is devoted to maintaining the safety of vessels their crew and cargo, and to the continued protection of the environment within the waters of Maine.

The pilotage system in the United States originated from judgment made by Congress in 1789. That judgment stated due to the localized and unique nature of pilotage, its regulation is best left to the individual States.¹ This judgment is now reflected in 46 U.S. Code § 8502 of Federal Regulations. This Federal Regulation states that pilotage of foreign flagged vessels, as well as U.S.-flagged vessels sailing between a U.S. port and a port in a foreign country (also known as sailing on register), is subject to State pilotage law and jurisdiction.

A compulsory pilotage requirement —placing a State-licensed pilot on the navigational bridge of a ship—is by far the most effective mechanism available to a State to protect its marine environment and maintain personal safety, while also facilitating maritime commerce. Maine State pilots are highly trained professionals who are an experts in all aspects of local navigation, are isolated from the economic pressures facing shipping companies, fully empowered to direct the navigation of the ship, and whose primary responsibility is to protect the interests of the State that issues the license.

If supported, LD 1477 will exempt a vessel normally required by law to utilize a compulsory pilotage requirement on every trip in or out of Maine. This bill will create an exemption and allow federally licensed pilots to pilot into Maine waters, with as little as eight round trip maneuvers over a specified route to navigate treacherous tidal sea passages with essentially no guidance from a State pilot.

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University of San Francisco Maritime Law Journal, provides a detailed history and overview of the State pilotage system in the United States. The article is available at: www.americanpilots.org/document_center/Activities/Unique_Institutions_Indispensable_Cogs_and_Hoary_Figures_Understanding_Pilotage_Regulation_in_the_United_States.pdf



Our State pilots are overseen by the Maine Pilotage Commission, as I mentioned above. It takes hundreds of trips and many years of training to obtain the level of skill required to become a state-licensed pilot. State-licensed pilots are on the water every day, very few individuals are more in tune with the state of the harbor and port than our state licensed pilots. It is in our state's best interest to maintain an effective compulsory pilotage system under no exception should Maine consider to voluntarily weaken this critical authority delegated from Congress.

The pilotage requirements currently in place serve an essential purpose in ensuring safety and efficiency of maritime operations in Maine's waters. Exempting passenger ferry services from these requirements could compromise safety standards, create unfair competition, and undermine the integrity of Maine's maritime regulations.

I urge the Legislature to carefully consider the potential consequences of this exemption and to prioritize the long-term interests of Maine's residents, businesses, environment and maritime community.

For the reasons specified, the Maine Pilotage Commission respectfully ask you to reject LD 1477 to protect the safety and sustainability of Maine's maritime operations and current Maine Pilotage laws. Thank you for your time and consideration today. I would be happy to answer any questions you have.

Sincerely,

Carrie Norton

Chair, Maine Pilotage Commission
Unlimited Master