



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Representative Holly Eaton introducing
**LD 1680, An Act to Create the Maine State Ferry Service Oversight
and Accountability Commission**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and fellow colleagues of the Transportation Committee, for the record, 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 proud to bring forward LD 1680, a bill designed to strengthen the connection between the Maine State Ferry Service, island communities and policymakers.

Ahead of this session, legislators who represent ferry-served islands worked together to submit a strong slate of bills for the Transportation Committee's consideration. Our goal was to offer a range of ideas that address the transportation needs of island communities and promote a stronger, more responsive ferry system.

I want to recognize that LD 1680 and LD 1731, sponsored by Senator Grohoski, share strong similarities in their intent. I am proud to serve as a cosponsor of LD 1731, and I appreciate the thoughtful work that went into that proposal.

While there are differences in structure between the two bills, both reflect a shared commitment to ensuring that islanders have a formal and respected voice in decisions that affect their transportation lifeline. LD 1731 strengthens the existing Ferry Advisory Board and improves communication between the Department of Transportation and island communities, while LD 1680 proposes the creation of a new, independent **Ferry Oversight Commission**, rooted within the Legislature.

LD 1680 would create a Commission made up of 10 members:

- One Senate member and one House member who serve on the Transportation Committee,
- Two members of the existing Maine State Ferry Advisory Board representing ferry-served islands,

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

- Two additional island representatives appointed by the Governor,
- And four members with relevant expertise in infrastructure, emergency services, economic development, or education.

The Commission would meet at least quarterly and would be tasked with:

- Reviewing proposals submitted by the Department of Transportation related to ferry operations, including berthing changes,
- Examining the effects of changes in ferry service on emergency response, education access, service reliability, and the economic vitality of island communities,
- Submitting an annual report with findings and recommendations directly to the Transportation Committee.

By establishing this Commission, LD 1680 ensures that ferry-served islands have **formal, ongoing, and legislative-level input** into key decisions about the ferry service that is vital to their communities. It builds a clear, structured pathway for island voices to be heard not only by DOT, but also by the policymakers responsible for oversight and long-term planning.

Both LD 1680 and LD 1731 represent important steps forward. Together, they show a shared commitment to ensuring that Maine's island communities are respected, supported, and included at every level of decision-making.

I respectfully urge the committee to support LD 1680. Thank you for your time and consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions.