

**TESTIMONY OF  
Deirdre Gilbert  
Department of Marine Resources**

**The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) is testifying  
In Opposition to  
LD 1678 An Act to Allocate Commercial Menhaden Fishing Licenses for Island Communities  
and  
LD 1679 An Act to Allocate Scallop Dragging Licenses for Island Communities  
Before the Committee on Marine Resources  
Sponsored by Representative Eaton  
Date of Hearing: May 1, 2025**

Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources, my name is Deirdre Gilbert, Director of State Marine Policy for the Department of Marine Resources, and I am testifying on behalf of the Department in opposition to LDs 1678 and 1679.

Both of these bills direct the Commissioner of Marine Resources to allocate licenses (one menhaden license and one scallop dragging license) for certain island communities, to be issued to an applicant who is a resident of each community. The bill prohibits a license issued to a resident of an island community from being transferred to a resident of a community other than the community to which the commissioner allocated the license. The bill also allows the commissioner to reallocate a license that goes unissued for 3 consecutive years to another island community and directs the commissioner to work with the municipal officers of the island communities and relevant organizations within the communities to implement and administer the provisions of the bill.

As you have heard throughout this session, access to licenses in limited entry fisheries is one of the most challenging issues we face. Across the lobster, scallop and menhaden fisheries you have heard previous requests to prioritize access for young people on the waiting lists, older people who have retired, people who previously participated in the fishery but did not meet established qualifying criteria, and now, residents of island communities.

The Department recognizes that Maine island communities face unique challenges when it comes to retaining access to fisheries. However, we cannot support the proposed solution for the following reasons:

- The bill would create 14 new licenses in both the scallop and menhaden fisheries.
  - The number of menhaden licenses has already been increased multiple times since the fishery became limited entry in 2023, including a bill with further requests pending this legislative session.
  - There is an existing entry system for scallop dragging licenses that was developed with input from the Scallop Advisory Council and which is based on a ratio of 3:2 (3 licenses out to 2 licenses in). Fourteen additional licenses would be on top of the yearly entry calculation, which is typically much less than that number.

- Licenses must be issued to individuals, not communities. The Department is given no guidance in the proposed legislation regarding who in a community should be provided the license or how that person should be selected.
- Island dynamics around licenses tend to be very divisive, and DMR does not want to be the arbitrator of island social conflicts.
- Many of the islands identified already have scallop and/or menhaden licenses, so the rationale for providing a single additional license for every island is not clear.
- This proposal will create new administrative challenges for the Department to track these 28 “special” licenses across 14 island communities.

Thank you for your consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.