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May 1, 2025

Testimony of Representative Holly Eaton introducing
LD 1678, An Act to Allocate Commercial Menhaden Fishing Licenses for
Island Communities
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources

Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler and fellow members of the Marine Resources Committee, for the record, my name is Representative Holly Eaton. I'm proud to represent House District 15, which includes the island and coastal communities of Deer Isle, Stonington, Brooklin, Tremont, Southwest Harbor, Frenchboro, Swan's Island, Isle au Haut and Vinalhaven.

LD 1678 is a bill rooted in fairness, access and the idea that the people who *lay their heads* on unbridged islands deserve a real chance to participate in the fisheries that have shaped their communities for generations. This bill would allocate one commercial menhaden license to each of 14 unbridged island communities, to be issued to a *resident* of that specific island—someone who lives there, contributes to the community and wants to stay.

I want to be clear: this bill doesn't interfere with current license holders. If someone on the island already holds a menhaden license under current law, nothing changes for them. LD 1678 simply creates one **additional opportunity**, dedicated to an island resident—an invitation for someone new or returning to get in the game.

Islanders—like many Mainers—often patch together a living across multiple jobs. They might lobster, scallop, help with childcare, serve on the fire department and dig clams—all in a single season. A license like this isn't a golden ticket—it's one more way to stay rooted and afloat in communities they love.

I know the committee is well aware that menhaden are managed under ASMFC's quota system and implemented through DMR. LD 1678 doesn't change that framework or add pressure to the fishery. It simply provides a fairer, more community-rooted access point within the state's existing allocation—ensuring that someone who lives on an unbridged island has a viable pathway to participate.

It also includes a safeguard: if the license goes unused for three consecutive years, it's reallocated to another island community that needs it. That way, the license continues to serve its purpose—supporting access, not sitting idle.

I respectfully urge the committee's support for LD 1678. Thank you for your time and for your continued commitment to Maine's island communities.