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*Testimony of Representative Morgan Rielly presenting*

## **LD 1245, "An Act to Create a Fund to Spread Awareness of Maine's Working Waterfronts"**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development*

Good afternoon Senator Curry, Representative Gere and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development. My name is Morgan Rielly, and I represent House District 127, which includes part of Westbrook. I am here today to present **LD 1245, "An Act to Create a Fund to Spread Awareness of Maine's Working Waterfronts."**

**LD 1245** will establish a non-lapsing fund within the Maine Office of Community Affairs (MOCA) to receive state, federal or private monies to spread awareness of Maine's working waterfronts. After speaking with Director Horn, she suggested broadening the fund's scope to allow MOCA to include technical assistance for communities to encourage the protection and development of working waterfronts. I think this is a great idea and have attached an amendment to my testimony with the changes.

The idea for this bill first came to me while working out on oyster farms in Casco Bay during conversations with sea farmers, shellfish harvesters, commercial fishermen and advocates for our working waterfronts. Our state is currently down to 20 miles of working waterfront out of a coastline of 5,000 miles. While we have been losing our working waterfronts to gentrification for decades, we've seen an acceleration over the past five years due to many people from out-of-state moving to our coastal and island communities. While a growing population is a good thing for our state's economy, it also presents issues with a lack of knowledge of the historic importance of our marine-based industries and the need to protect access to our waterfronts. We have also witnessed the destruction of our working waterfronts to increasingly powerful storms, like the ones that destroyed many working waterfront properties last year.

District 127: Westbrook

Groups like the Maine Coast Fishermen's Association have developed awareness campaigns with their Scuttlebutt brochure. This is an example of an ingenious way to spread awareness about opportunities for working waterfront conversations and ways to connect community members with those who utilize our working waterfronts. MOCA can use this fund to help support communities, organizations and coalitions lead working waterfront awareness campaigns. For example, it can be used for digital ads over social media during tourism season about proper etiquette when using town landings that many fishermen and seafarers use, or it can be used to do mailer campaigns about opportunities with local land trusts to conserve working waterfront property.

Besides spreading awareness, this fund can also provide technical assistance for our coastal and island communities. With the Coastal Program (which has been leading a working waterfront inventory task force) moving under MOCA, along with the Working Waterfront Coordinator position that was recently funded by the NOAA IRA grant, this presents the opportunity for MOCA to be able to assist communities looking at identifying and protecting existing points of access and working waterfront infrastructure. The fund can also allow MOCA opportunities to assist communities with developing new working waterfronts.

Speaking with Director Horn, we are currently only asking to first establish the Fund as a receptacle for future monies and are not asking for monies from the General Fund. Having it be a non-lapsing fund means we can aggregate grants and donations across fiscal years so that MOCA can use multiple funding sources to complete larger projects.

Without our working waterfronts, our state risks losing out on a major source of revenue and thousands of jobs. We also risk losing a key piece of our identity. Establishing this fund will further help MOCA's work with providing technical assistance to our communities to protect our working waterfronts, along with spreading awareness of them among new residents.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions or to provide you with any information for your upcoming work session.

### **Sponsor's Amendment for LD 1245**

The Working Waterfront Information Campaign and Technical Assistance Fund, referred to in this section as "the fund," is established. Balances in the fund may not lapse and must be carried forward and used for the purposes of this section. The fund is administered by the office, and the office may accept and deposit in the fund money from private and public sources. In carrying out the purposes of the fund, the office shall work with the Department of Economic and Community Development, Office of Tourism; the Department of Marine Resources; coastal municipal and regional governments; and organizations and coalitions that have experience advocating for developing and protecting the protection and preservation of working waterfronts in the State and experience working with persons who use working waterfronts in the State. In collaboration with the entities listed in this section, the office shall use the fund in the production of working waterfront information campaigns and the provision of technical assistance to encourage protection and development of working waterfronts, including the design and implementation of an online and direct mail information campaign targeting tourists and new residents in coastal and island communities, to provide information about what working waterfronts are, who uses working waterfronts and opportunities to protect and preserve working waterfronts. As used in this section, "working waterfront" means a parcel of land abutting water subject to tidal influence or land located in the intertidal zone that is used primarily or predominantly to provide access to or support the conduct of commercial fishing and marine activities.