

May 2025

RE: LD 1245 – An Act to Create a Fund to Spread Awareness of Maine's Working Waterfronts

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development,

My name is Stacey Keefer. I am a resident of Union and I am testifying today in my capacity as Director for the Maine Marine Trades Association (MMTA). MMTA represents over 120 Maine businesses and an industry comprised of boatyards, boat builders, marinas, boat dealers, marine retailers, and many businesses who are part of, or who serve, working waterfronts.

MMTA would like to thank Representative Reilly and co-sponsors of LD 1245 for acknowledging the needs of working waterfronts, especially recognizing a lack of education for tourists and new coastal residents regarding working waterfront value and vulnerability. Awareness and education campaigns could help build stronger communities where working waterfront businesses are embraced for their historic significance, economic contributions, and lifestyle diversity along a coast that is becoming alarmingly gentrified. Tourists already enjoy fresh Maine seafood but often miss the connection between their tasty lunch and the need for working waterfront preservation. New residents need to understand that working waterfronts may create a little noise and look a little different, but their operations cannot exist elsewhere and are essential to our Maine's economy and food supply.

MMTA has taken on an example of our own education campaign with the help of a NOAA Marine Debris Coalition Grant. Our education campaign is aimed at marine debris prevention with an emphasis on teaching recreational boaters how to best navigate around fishing and sea farming gear in order to prevent marine debris and economic harm to our businesses in the fishing industry. To my knowledge, the State has never provided this type of information to our visiting boaters or new boaters, so we are pleased to be collaborating to fulfil that need.

Just this week the Working Waterfront Coalition was discussing a need for help with communications. MMTA appreciates that the proposed fund in LD 1245 could be supported by both private and public sources but managed strategically and more effectively by the State.

Thank you for your consideration and we urge you to support LD 1245. I am happy to answer questions.

Respectfully,



Stacey Keefer
Maine Marine Trades Association, Executive Director

