

## Committee on Taxation

### Testimony of Valerie Young, Chief of Staff, Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences

- In Opposition to LD 438 – An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Property Tax Exemptions for Certain Nonprofit Organizations
- In Opposition to LD 1795 – An Act to Change the Calculation for Municipal Service Charges for Tax-exempt Organizations

May 6, 2025

Senator Grohoski, Representative Perry, and esteemed members of the Taxation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is **Valerie Young**, and I am the **Chief of Staff at Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences**, an independent, nonprofit marine research institution based in East Boothbay. I am here to express our **strong opposition to LD 438 and LD 1795**—two bills that would undermine Maine’s nonprofit sector and penalize organizations that deliver vital services to Maine people every day.

### Our Mission and Public Service

For more than 50 years, Bigelow Laboratory has advanced science, education, and innovation that support Maine’s communities, economy, and environment. **These bills would create financial uncertainty for nonprofits like ours**—institutions with lean budgets and public missions that cannot simply raise prices to offset new municipal fees. The money has to come from somewhere—and often, that means cutting back on the very programs that serve the public.

### Far-Reaching Contributions to Maine

Bigelow Laboratory delivers substantial public benefit across multiple sectors:

- **Clean Water & Public Health**  
We partner in the Boothbay Clean Drinking Water Initiative, analyzing local water sources to help municipalities identify pollutants and prevent harmful algal blooms—**work we often perform at our own expense**. These efforts safeguard both public health and the **tourism-dependent local economy**.
- **Shellfish Safety & Marine Monitoring**  
We test for toxins in shellfish and contribute to the Maine Department of Marine Resources’



monitoring program. Our data help protect the shellfish economy and ensure public safety, while our research supports forecasting tools that anticipate marine health threats.

- **Education & Workforce Development**

Our Keller BLOOM program has provided hands-on science education to high school juniors across Maine for more than 35 years, **free of charge**. Many alumni pursue careers in science and education—**many stay right here in Maine**, strengthening our future workforce.

- **Year-Round Economic Development**

Our work attracts scientists, young families, and research collaborators to the Boothbay region, **stimulating economic activity beyond the summer season**. While our research reaches a global audience, it remains grounded in Maine's local priorities.

#### **Tax Exemptions Reflect Our Value**

**Nonprofit tax exemptions are not giveaways.** They are **recognition of the substantial, measurable public good** we provide. We don't just serve our own missions—we **prop up entire sectors** of Maine's economy, often behind the scenes.

If enacted, **LD 438 and LD 1795 would shift costs onto organizations that are already subsidizing essential public services**. This is not sustainable—and it risks damaging the very ecosystem of collaboration that makes Maine work.

These bills threaten to erode the contributions of Maine's nonprofit sector, from clean water and safe seafood to education and economic development. We **urge the Committee to reject LD 438 and LD 1795** and to continue supporting the organizations that serve as the **unseen backbone of Maine's economy and communities**.

**Thank you for your time and consideration.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Valerie Young  
Chief of Staff  
Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences

