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Testimony of Rep. Cheryl Golek in support of

LD 1864, An Act to Facilitate the Reconstruction of Storm-damaged Commercial Fisheries Facilities and Infrastructure

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development

Senator Curry, Representative Gere and members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, my name is Cheryl Golek, and I represent District 99, which includes Harpswell and part of Brunswick. Today, I am testifying in strong support of **LD 1864, An Act to Facilitate the Reconstruction of Storm-damaged Commercial Fisheries Facilities and Infrastructure**.

In Harpswell, our working waterfront is intrinsic to our way of life. My community is filled with folks who have made their life's work off the water. From lobstermen to oyster farmers and other related harvesting professions, their work on the ocean is the backbone of our town and part of what makes Harpswell such a unique place to live.

Harpowell's working waterfront deeply benefits our state's economy. Harpswell hosts more coastlines than any municipality in the state. At 216 miles, Harpswell's fishing industry is hundreds of years old and has a fleet of 385 fishing vessels that generate about \$68 million in gross annual revenue.

The winter storms of 2023-2024 wreaked havoc on the infrastructure that supports these professions, and all these months later, we are still trying to rebuild. The damage caused by that series of weather events affected structures like piers, docks and wharves, vital to the livelihoods of those who rely on the water to make ends meet. This measure seeks to help fishermen and businesses access federal funds required to move forward in their building efforts. It grants a variance from the shoreland zoning organization and floodplain ordinance in Harpswell, allowing folks to conduct the necessary repairs and access federal funding before the fall deadline.

We cannot miss this vital window to help rebuild the community of Harpswell and support its residents. Seafood is one of Maine's most well-known products; not only would this measure help support a local economy, but it would work to sustain our state's economy as well. I thank Senator Daughtry for sponsoring this measure, and I am happy to take questions.