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Testimony of Rep. Ed Crockett introducing
**LD 1874, An Act to Enable the Maine Pilotage Commission to Oversee
Pilots Operating in Portland Harbor**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and esteemed members of the Transportation Committee, my name is Representative Ed Crockett, and I have the honor of representing House District 118, which includes parts of Portland and Falmouth. I am pleased to present **LD 1874, An Act to Enable the Maine Pilotage Commission to Oversee Pilots Operating in Portland Harbor** and urge the Committee's support.

As the title of the bill indicates, this bill would transfer regulatory oversight of sea pilots in Portland Harbor from the Portland Board of Harbor Commissioners to the Maine Pilotage Commission (MPC). Although the bill itself is just over a page in length, the words on the page reflect months of discussions and input from a wide range of stakeholders. I thank all of those parties for their diligent participation in bringing forward LD 1874, which I believe will help ensure the safety and security of Portland Harbor for its residents, businesses and visitors.

First, what is a sea pilot? They are highly skilled navigating pilots who meet highly stringent standards of education, have experience piloting a wide range of vessels and specific knowledge and experience of the port in which they serve. All ports throughout the nation have sea pilots, including here in Maine. This bill is about who regulates the operation of sea pilots in Portland Harbor.

Currently, sea pilots in Portland Harbor are regulated by the Portland Board of Harbor Commissioners, which is a five-member quasi-municipal authority that has been in existence for many years, longer than the MPC has been in existence. Like many harbor commissions throughout the state, the Portland board has jurisdiction over moorings, docks, dredging, eel grass and piers in Portland Harbor. The board also has jurisdiction over docking masters, who operate tug boats in Portland Harbor, and sea pilots, who navigate vessels in and out of Portland

Harbor. LD 1874 will change none of those functions with the sole exception of the last one: jurisdiction over sea pilots in Portland Harbor.

Under the bill, responsibility for licensing sea pilots in Portland Harbor and setting the rates they charge for their services would move to the MPC, which is a seven-member quasi-state agency that oversees the licensure and rates of sea pilots in every other port in the state, other than Portland Harbor. LD 1874 would, for the first time, make it so all sea pilots in Maine would fall under the same jurisdiction.

You will hear more from others about the MPC, how it operates and what it does. But the bottom line is that this state commission has a singular focus: the licensure of sea pilots and setting their rates. The board members of the commission include three sea pilots from different geographies in the state; two members who are port users; and two members of the public with expertise in maritime and pilotage activities. The commission has an executive director. The commission is staffed by experts from the Maine Department of Transportation (DOT). And the commission is able to draw upon the resources of the Maine Attorney General's Office, which staffs all of the commission's board meetings. These qualities make the MPC uniquely well-positioned to support the long-term safety and stability of sea pilotage services in Maine's busiest commercial harbor.

At the same time, LD 1874 is carefully crafted to preserve continuity and respect for local practices. It carries forward Portland's existing rules for pilot licensure, apprenticeship, training and rate-setting during a transition period lasting at least through the end of 2027. After that, the state pilotage commission will have the authority to evaluate and revise those rules as needed, but the expectation is that the rules would remain in place without limit unless there was a strong need to change them. This structure strikes a thoughtful balance: it honors the practices that have long served Portland Harbor, while also providing a clear path for statewide consistency and modernization going forward.

To make sure the language of the bill works, this bill included input from numerous stakeholders. The Portland Pilots and the American Pilots Association have weighed in. The MPC held six separate meetings to discuss the bill. The Maine DOT has reviewed the bill. The bill was provided to the cities of Portland and South Portland, and the Portland Board of Harbor Commissioners and their members. The bill was provided to members of the business community and port users in Portland Harbor. And the bill was even provided to former members of the Portland Board. I commend all of the work that has been done to seek and receive input before bringing the bill forward.

Of course, with such a diverse array of stakeholders, it is inevitable that new issues emerge, which is why I am also including in my testimony a proposed amendment to the bill to address local concerns that emerged in the last several weeks. Last week, the Portland Board of Harbor Commissioners voted to oppose LD 1874 unless two amendments were made: (1) the bill made

clear that any rates set by the MPC were “just and reasonable,” and (2) the bill was amended to ensure that one seat on the MPC included representation from Portland or South Portland. My amendment is intended to meet both requests, so I ask that the amendment be considered part of this bill.

With that, I thank you for your time and consideration. I hope you will join me in supporting this bill, and I would be happy to answer any questions.