

Testimony of Greg Lambert before the marine resources legislative committee 2/5/26

Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler, my name is Greg Lambert and I am the chair of the Maine Department of Marine Resources Aquaculture Advisory Council. I stand before you today to testify in support of LD 2025 “An Act to Create a Limited-purpose License for Aquaculture Nursery and Husbandry Activities and to Clarify the Aquaculture Lease Amendment Process”. The genesis of this act came out of legislation you considered in the first session of the 132nd legislative session last year. Upon reviewing and considering that legislation you passed a resolve directing the DMR to work with the Aquaculture Advisory Council to address the issue of lease amendments that were necessary as a result of a policy change DMR had started to enact in 2024. That change required lease holders to apply for lease amendments for relatively small changes to their operations.

Aquaculture is a relatively young field and production methods and equipment are evolving rapidly due to fast moving new science and technologies. At the time the existing amendment process was slow and placed a significant administrative burden on DMR. The process also inhibited innovation and the development of production methods that would reduce environmental impact and user conflicts. LD 2025 is the product of roughly a years worth of work by the Aquaculture Advisory Council in collaboration with the DMR. I would like to thank the DMR for their leadership and collaboration with the AQAC on this matter. I would also like to thank Representative Reilly for sponsoring LD 2025 and for his continued support of Maines working waterfront communities. In order to complete the work we were charged with, the advisory council formed a series of working groups. LD 2025 was written by DMR to capture the results of these working groups and by and large does a great job of doing that. You are very aware that no legislation is perfect but this particular legislation will benefit aquaculture as a whole while also removing some burden for the Department.

LD 2025 gives the department broad authority to develop rules to enact its intent. The advisory council recognizes that the bill asks that any rules resulting from the legislation are minor technical and as such will not come back before your committee for review and approval. The specifics of the rules developed to implement LD 2025’s intent are important and will significantly determine its impact on the aquaculture sector and the thousands of people whose livelihoods depend on viable working waterfront businesses. As such we ask your committee to direct the DMR to work with the Aquaculture Advisory Committee on the development of those rules and provide a copy of the draft rules to the Advisory committee before they go out to public comment.

Finally, I do want to make one important additional point. It is my understanding that the department is going to bring forward three suggested amendments. The advisory council has not seen those and as such, is not able to take a position on those amendments at this time.

Thank you for your attention and I would be glad to answer any questions and or provide support at the work session.