

**TESTIMONY OF
Deirdre Gilbert
Department of Marine Resources**

**The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) is testifying
In Opposition to
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LD 1231 An Act to Offer Military Veterans a 50 Percent Discount on the License Fee
for a Commercial Shellfish License
Before the Committee on Marine Resources
Sponsored by Representative Tuell
Date of Hearing: February 12, 2026**

Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources, my name is Deirdre Gilbert, I am Director of State Marine Policy at the Maine Department of Marine Resources, and I am testifying on behalf of the Department in opposition to LD 1231.

LD 1231 would provide that military veterans honorably discharged would be eligible for a commercial shellfish license at half of the cost paid by other commercial shellfish license holders. Certainly the Department appreciates, and is grateful for, the Veterans who have served our country. For this reason, the Department has supported providing noncommercial licenses for both lobstering and scalloping to disabled veterans at no cost. This is consistent with what is offered by our sister agency, Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, who issue complimentary licenses to fish, trap, or hunt to disabled veterans.

The difference with LD 1231 is that it would provide this discount to all veterans, and for a commercial endeavor. When we sought feedback from the Shellfish Advisory Council on this bill they declined to take a vote but generally indicated that they felt that all individuals doing the same commercial activity should have to pay the same license fee.

For additional context, the total cost of a commercial shellfish license for individuals over the age of 18 and under the age of 70 is \$133. The license fee for a commercial shellfish license is \$58.25, of which \$40.75 goes to the General Fund and \$17.50 goes to to the Department's dedicated "Opportunity Fund". There is also a surcharge on this license of \$74.75, which goes to the Shellfish Fund. Because LD 1231 proposes only to offer a 50% discount on the "license fee", it would lower the cost of this license from \$133 to \$104. If the proponents intended to also provide a 50% discount on the license surcharge, it would reduce the cost of the license to \$67, which would have a negative effect on the Shellfish Fund. The impact of that reduction is difficult to estimate, because DMR does not have any information on the number of veterans holding commercial shellfish licenses.

Finally, individuals fishing commercially for shellfish in towns that have a municipal shellfish management program are also required to obtain a license from the town. For clarity, LD 1231 would not impact the fees a veteran must pay for a license issued by the town.

While sincerely appreciative of the service to our country, the Department would be concerned that if the precedent were set to issue commercial shellfish licenses to veterans at half the cost, it would be difficult to explain why all other commercial harvesting licenses are not available to veterans at the same discount. Again, without any information about the number of veterans holding these licenses, there would be an unknown impact to the General Fund, and Department dedicated accounts used for the management and enforcement of these fisheries.

Thank you for your consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.