

**TESTIMONY OF
Carl Wilson, Commissioner
Department of Marine Resources**

**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and
Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry**

**LD 2212 - An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and
Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law
Necessary to the Proper Operations of State**

Date of Hearing: February 23, 2026

Good afternoon, Senators Rotundo and Talbot Ross, Representatives Gattine and Plueker, and Members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. My name is Carl Wilson, and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Marine Resources. I am here today to testify in support of the amendment brought forward by Commissioner Beal to 5 MRSA, section 1532, providing an ongoing source of funding for the Land for Maine's Future (LMF) Program.

LMF serves a critical role in conserving land for its natural, economic, and recreational values. They have a robust "working lands" portfolio, protecting properties that benefit Maine's heritage industries, including fishing and farming. Since 2006, Maine DMR has partnered with LMF to administer the Working Waterfront Access Protection Program (WWAPP). This Program encumbers critically important working waterfronts with covenants that ensure their ongoing availability to Maine's commercial fishing and aquaculture industries.

Maine's marine resources drive the economies of our coastal communities. Commercial fishing and aquaculture activities generate landings that are worth over \$500 million annually. Conservatively, these activities are worth more than \$1.5 billion to the Maine economy. However, these activities are at risk, given the high risk of conversion of working waterfront properties to non-working waterfront uses. The WWAPP is designed to secure access to working waterfronts in perpetuity, for our historical fisheries and those that may emerge in the future. While we have made great strides over the first two decades of the Program, securing over 30 working waterfront properties throughout Maine's coastal counties, there is much more that could be done. While we have been fortunate to benefit from multiple rounds of bond funding as well as the recent General Fund Appropriation, an ongoing, reliable, and stable source of funding would guarantee this important work can continue.

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