



Jill C. Duson
Senator, District 27
Assistant Majority Leader

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony of Senator Jill C. Duson in support of
LD 2216, An Act to Establish the Maine Blue Economy Center
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development

March 5, 2026

Good afternoon, Senator Curry, Representative Gere and esteemed members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee. My name is Jill Duson. I represent State Senate District 27, which includes part of Portland and part of Westbrook. In addition, I'm honored to serve as the Senate Assistant Majority Leader. I am here today to speak in support of LD 2216, An Act to Establish the Maine Blue Economy Center, and the amendment the committee will consider.

I would like to start by thanking the Chairs and members of this committee for their diligence and appetite to keep us moving forward on Blue Economy policy and for reporting out this legislation to establish a Blue Economy Center. Having a centralized hub for collaboration, growth and oversight will bolster the incredibly diverse spectrum of sustainable blue economy issues and policy. According to NOAA, ocean-related businesses contributed nearly \$6.8 billion to Maine's gross domestic product and employed over 90,000 people.

Understanding the bill as drafted, I do have some suggestions to amend the language slightly to mirror that of the Life Sciences Center established in LD 1643. We hope to follow that existing, approved framework. I know the committee put a great deal of work into insuring that language falls into statutory guidelines and I think the amendment that the committee will consider could get the committee there, given the limited time we have left to get our work done. I've been briefed on potential language which has help us arrive at this moment.

As a longtime advocate for the working waterfront in our state's largest port, being a part of the Blue Economy team has been a real honor. Working to preserve and reinvigorate our largest and oldest heritage industry while ensuring we aren't leaving certain sectors or industries behind has been a key focus of our work. The willingness for stakeholders across Maine to come to the table, share the history and plot the future of each sector as we look to better inform and strengthen this work.

Thank you for allowing me to offer insight into this important bill. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have and make myself available for the work session.