



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

MAINE.
ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL DUGUAY
COMMISSIONER

March 5, 2026

**Testimony for
LD 2216 An Act to Establish the Maine Blue Economy Center**

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development, I am Maureen Terry, Legislative Liaison for the Department of Economic and Community Development.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on *An Act to Establish the Maine Blue Economy Center*. I am speaking neither for nor against the bill at this time, but to offer perspective and recommendations for your consideration.

Maine stands at a rare and strategic moment. Few places in the world are as naturally positioned to lead in the blue economy as our state. With over 3,400 miles of coastline, deep working waterfront traditions, and globally respected research and development institutions, Maine has the foundational assets to lead in aquaculture, marine biotechnology, ocean data, resilient coastal infrastructure, and sustainable marine industries.

Institutions such as the University of Maine System, Bigelow Labs, the Downeast Institute and the Maine Technology Institute already drive innovation and workforce development in marine science, engineering, and applied research. At the same time, Maine's heritage industries — commercial fishing, marine trades, boat building, and a growing life sciences sector — provide real-world expertise and infrastructure that many other states are trying to build from scratch.

This alignment of geography, industry, research capacity, and workforce culture is rare. If cultivated thoughtfully, the blue economy represents a generational opportunity for Maine to be not just competitive, but nationally and internationally recognized as a leader. That said, the department understands that the fiscal note and the proposed \$1,000,000 General Fund allocation for start-up costs may give some pause, particularly as the State balances multiple priorities.



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With that in mind, we respectfully offer a recommendation of phased implementation. Consider a smaller initial appropriation focused on core organizational capacity — such as strategic planning, coordination, and federal grant pursuit — before expanding to full operational programming.

The blue economy is not speculative for Maine — it builds upon who we already are. From working waterfronts to advanced composites research, from marine biotechnology to sustainable propulsion systems, Maine has both heritage and innovation on its side. The question before the committee is not whether opportunity exists, but how best to structure this initiative so that it is fiscally responsible, collaborative, and positioned for long-term success. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and for your work to ensure that Maine remains at the top of its game in industries that define both our economy and our identity.

I am happy to answer any questions.