

January 2022

TO: The Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

RE: LD1389: An Act to Improve Maritime Education in Maine

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Kevin Burns, I am Vice President of Design and Product Development for both Sabre Yachts and Back Cove Yachts here in Maine. I have served as a marine industry professional for over 20 years in our State, and over many of those years I have collaborated with programs at the University of Maine, The Landing School, and recently the Maine Ocean School. As someone working at an executive level of one of Maine's largest recreational boatbuilding enterprises, I have experienced first hand our State's challenges with workforce development, and the corresponding impacts on our labor force.

We here in Maine are fortunate to have a deep and storied maritime history, and that history has continued to be built upon through our special marine-centric educational opportunities and partnerships, which set Maine apart from other states in our nation. The depth of our maritime infrastructure affords our state, and those enterprises based here, a competitive advantage over neighboring states and regions. A large component of this competitive advantage centers around our continued fostering of marine-centric educational opportunities, and the uniquely qualified workforce that those opportunities can produce.

Last fall, I had the chance to visit the Maine Ocean School and meet with the students there in the Marine Mathematics class. I found a group of fully engaged students who were well prepared to ask great questions and participate in a discussion which touched on everything from the running a marine business to incorporating advanced technologies like composites and 3D printing. It was clear from my interaction that the school was succeeding with the mission of delivering a unique and valuable marine focused education for the students. It was heartening to imagine our workforce being strengthened by having these motivated students progressing into roles within Maine's maritime industries.

Since my visit, I have been made aware of some of the hurdles and challenges facing the school and I would certainly encourage the Committee to collaborate with the Maine Ocean School Board of Trustees to honor the original founding legislation and offer fair time (in the midst of pandemic challenges) to continue this beneficial educational programming and address the current sunset clause which is a threat to that mission. I very much believe that Maine Ocean School is, and will continue to be, an asset for the students and the workforce development needs of the state and our maritime related industries in particular.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Burns', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Keivn Burns
Sabre Yachts
Back Cove Yachts