

January 19, 2022

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

I am writing to you today in support of LD1389 - An Act To Improve Maritime Education In Maine. As the Assistant Dean of Lifelong Learning and the Hutchinson Center at the University of Maine, I have interacted with Maine Ocean School since its inception, helping to provide educational opportunities for students at the Hutchinson Center in Belfast. In light of the past successful collaborations with the Maine Ocean School, we are interested in discussions regarding the Hutchinson Center as a possible site for educational and operational purposes, as well as exploring collaborations on programming such as Early College and Research Learning Experiences.

I understand the School has been asked to revisit its model for providing marine-based education to high school students. The staff at the Hutchinson Center and at the University of Maine have discussed an alternative model with Board of Trustees members. While there is much to be worked out, the timing for this revisit is amazingly coincident with our own rethinking for the Hutchinson Center's mission and business model. We are willing to have additional conversations with the School Board and other stakeholders to consider how our restructuring efforts could be complementary. Further, should the Committee be amenable to creating a study group to consider alternative models, the Hutchinson Center would be open to further discussion on the matter.

Public education in this area is more important now than ever as the marine trades represent a \$2.9B annual economic impact for Maine and the biggest obstacle for growth that boat builders, boatyards, and marinas face is finding sufficient workforce. The importance of this sector and need for lifelong learning will certainly be at the forefront of discussions as we rethink the Hutchinson Center. I anticipate the curriculum and program that has been developed by Maine Ocean School will play a large role in addressing the needs of the marine trades and could be an asset to the Hutchinson Center's new mission and business model.

Sincerely,



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