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Please accept my written testimony in strong support of LD 593 and its amendment titled, “An Act to Restore Eelgrass Mapping and Enhance Salt Marsh Vegetation Mapping in the State”. Eelgrass meadows and salt marsh ecosystems are extremely important coastal habitats, providing a variety of benefits to people in Maine. They provide nutrients and habitat for commercially important fisheries, they reduce shoreline erosion and buffer against storm activity, they filter pollutants out of the water column, and they are highly efficient at sequestering and storing carbon. In fact, healthy salt marshes and eelgrass beds are up to 10x more efficient at burying carbon than upland forests. The regular mapping of these coastal ecosystems allows scientists to identify degraded eelgrass beds and salt marshes and to identify restoration opportunities. Restoration of eelgrass beds and salt marshes enhances their carbon burial potential and contributes to the reduction of carbon emissions by the state. I urge you to vote in favor of LD 593; this bill supports the blue carbon and nature-based solutions strategies currently articulated in the Maine Won’t Wait Plan.