

Hello,

I am writing to express my opposition to LD 508. My name is Jeff Auger and I have been an oyster farmer in Maine for the last ten years.

LD 508 is yet another attack on our way of life organized by individuals that want to eliminate aquaculture in Maine waters. Of the 17 stakeholders proposed in the working group only two are from aquaculture. This puts the regulated community at a significant disadvantage and ensures their needs cannot be heard. Combined with the fact that this bill was held confidential until the last moment (so that we couldn't adequately respond) shows the drafters intent to silence the aquaculture community.

This is a reactionary piece of legislation resulting from the Frenchman Bay proposal. We have one of the strictest regulatory frameworks in the world, a framework that is viewed as a "gold standard" and attracts individuals from all over the world to learn how we regulate aquaculture. Our high standards would have allowed a fair hearing on the project, but most likely would have not approved American Aquafarms' proposal. That is how our system works, it doesn't allow bad proposals to get through. I have seen many projects over the last ten years fail because they can't reach the high standards we have in Maine...the system works we just need to make sure it is allowed to function.

Requiring three state agencies to commit significant staff time and resources for a study will further burden our already taxed departments. We have had 24 studies on aquaculture in the state in the last 30 years, we do not need another. Taking tax dollars and diverting agency resources away from their regulatory responsibilities for a politically motivated study will not result in improvements to our regulatory framework, it will harm it.

-Jeff Auger