

Megan Sorby
Kingfish Maine
LD 508

Senator Stacy Brenner, Representative Lori Gramlich and members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

My name is Megan Sorby, and I am the Operations Manager for Kingfish Maine, a land-based recirculating aquaculture company. I have worked in aquaculture for over 15 years hold a degree in Marine Biology and Chemistry and a Master's in Sustainable Aquaculture.

I am writing to you today to oppose LD 508.

As a company that has recently gone through the permitting framework for aquaculture in the state of Maine over the past three years, I can confidently say the process is robust. This isn't just for land-based facilities. Offshore facilities must also undertake significant review by a multitude of agencies prior to being permitted. Just because a permit is issued by one agency, for example, Department of Marine Resources, doesn't mean reviewing staff have not consulted other agencies for their review and sign off. In our case, while our permits were issued by four agencies, over TEN separate regulatory offices had oversight and comment periods on our process. Although the main permitting agencies for offshore may be different, the standard of review with other offices is the same. Offshore operations are held to the same water quality requirements as land developments, and in some instances, particularly related to conflicts with other resource users, are even more stringent.

The existing system is in place to encourage a thorough review and understanding of any development and to hold that development to state standards of care for the environment. This bill proposes forming a committee, largely made up of those without experience in the aquaculture space, in order to advise on who should oversee this industry. In the last three decades, there have been no less than 24 studies of aquaculture and its regulation. It is apparent that the existing system works, but those behind this bill simply don't like that anything related to aquaculture is permitted at all.

It is convenient to eliminate examples of where the existing regulations have worked in halting an application due to a lack of information or failing to address a specific state standard of environmental care, but these examples exist, proving the efficacy of the existing framework. Why form a committee, wasting valuable time and resources, for something that is not broken?

Lastly, and it seems silly to state something so obvious, but it defies logic to impose land use standards on marine/ aquatic leases. In particular, because these standards would not be purpose written to aquatic operations, like the current ones are, it makes it an absolute certainty that there will be loopholes and cases where regulatory oversight is reduced due to the lack of specificity for the marine environment.

I implore the committee to trust the existing system and not waste time and money on formation of a committee to answer a question that is already well defined.