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Maine Coast Fishermen's Association

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology:

On behalf of the Maine Coast Fishermen's Association, I am here today to speak in support of LD 101.

You have probably heard us say it before: Maine fishermen are on the frontlines of climate change and not only are they learning to adapt to environmental shifts like fast-changing weather patterns, they are contending with new industries and policies that are aimed at mitigating climate change. And on top of all that, the cost of doing business is increasing as permits, quota, and fuel become more expensive; the coast is becoming more appealing to people less familiar with living near a working waterfront growing both conflicts and the price of homes in Maine's traditional fishing villages; and, fishermen are managing threats and incredibly restrictive and costly new rules in response to a narrative of hypothetical whale entanglements so some organizations can fundraise.

I would kindly like to remind everyone today that fishermen are human beings that sometimes find themselves in precarious situations, because the Gulf of Maine is ultimately the one in control, and they do this to bring healthy, fresh, wild proteins to our tables. Wild fish and shellfish are some of the healthiest foods that you can consume. Maine has the opportunity to make these foods accessible to more people, to find ways to utilize the entirety of the product and decrease waste while increasing output and seafood can feed hungry Mainers - we saw throughout the pandemic consumer interest in local seafood in the United States grow immensely.

Maine fishermen are truly concerned about the future of their businesses. All Maine fishermen, not just lobstermen: scallopers, groundfish fishermen, herring fishermen, menhaden, herring, and harvesters in the intertidal, do not want to see development in the Gulf of Maine. And to be clear, that is what we are talking about. Not one or twelve turbines, but also the hundreds if not thousands that come after it.

Yes, we are worried about our fishing grounds because any loss to fishing grounds for even just a few fishermen will impact all of the other fishermen.

We are worried about our safety and we don't feel like anyone is taking our safety concerns seriously, which is incredibly demeaning.

We have no resources at our disposal to help mitigate any impacts to our businesses; we have no structure in place to support the growing number of mental illnesses amongst fishermen and their families; we have no grant programs with funding available to help us market our product; many fishermen don't have health insurance; many fishermen with whom I have spoken in the past few months are in tears when they tell me they don't know what else they can do. (These can all be considered forms of infrastructure necessary to conduct business safely and well.)

This is not just about one turbine or twelve turbines. This is about the future of Maine and its 5000 plus fishermen and their families- all Maine fishermen and all of the industries and jobs that they help support and create. This is about local small businesses versus large foreign corporations. This is about the Gulf of Maine, and whether fishermen are able to continue to share it with other current marine users, or if it becomes occupied by large corporations that are not committed to protecting it.

This is moving at an incredibly fast pace, during an unprecedented time in our existence, with little regard to what honest science can tell us. We do this right, or we don't do it all, and because it is becoming more and more clear that the Governor's Offshore Wind Development Road Map is not a priority, the Maine Coast Fishermen's Association is in support of LD 101.