

To: Members of the Joint Committee on Energy Utilities and Technology
From: Ben Martens, Executive Director
Date: May 18, 2023

Re: Testimony in Opposition to L.D. 1895: An Act Regarding the Procurement of Energy from Offshore Wind Resources



Dear Senator Lawrence, Representative Ziegler and Members of the Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

The Maine Coast Fishermen's Association (MCFA) is an industry-based nonprofit dedicated to restoring the fisheries of the Gulf of Maine and preserving Maine's iconic fishing communities for future generations. As an organization founded and led by Maine fishermen, our objectives encompass providing a voice for fishing communities, rebuilding the Gulf of Maine ecosystem, and supporting diverse fishing businesses across the state.

MCFA makes every effort to engage deeply and constructively in the offshore energy development sector. MCFA actively participated in the Maine Offshore Wind Road Map Fisheries Working Group and holds a position on the board of the Offshore Wind Research Consortium. Our staff and fishermen partner on research projects esteemed institutions like the University of Maine, Department of Marine Resources, Gulf of Maine Research Institute, and Colby College. These collaborative efforts focus on assessing the short and long-term impacts of offshore wind development on Maine's fishing communities.

With this background, I respectfully express our firm opposition to L.D. 1895: An Act Regarding the Procurement of Energy from Offshore Wind Resources, in its current published form and any updated language that may be adopted through an amendment. While MCFA is a fisheries nonprofit, our foremost allegiance lies with the Gulf of Maine as an ecosystem. We firmly believe that without thriving fish populations, we cannot sustain our fishermen or fulfill our mission to promote science-based decision making, accountable fishing practices, and responsible management for the benefit of future generations.

We harbor concerns that offshore energy development will inflict harm upon our ocean ecosystem. Advancing large-scale energy development or procurement should be postponed until we comprehensively understand the impacts of ocean development. The state of Maine has proposed a test site off Monhegan and a research array off Portland. Maine citizens deserve to understand what the analysis and assessment of these projects reveal, before the Legislature approves further large-scale development.

Maine's fishermen have consistently raised legitimate concerns and questions regarding offshore wind development and its potential impacts on their communities, businesses, and the Maine seafood economy. These questions remain unanswered. We lack clarity on the specific impacts such development will have on the ecosystem, the technology employed, the permissible activities around these structures, and the equitable representation of fishermen in decision-making processes related to ocean utilization.

The Offshore Wind Road Map took significant strides in identifying opportunities and needs within this domain, but several critical questions persist. The diligent efforts by the State of Maine, particularly the Governor's office and the Department of Marine Resources, have been commendable, but in attempting to address some of these concerns. Answers have yet to materialize. While the research array and the project off Monhegan will eventually shed light on some of these aspects, we also require a more

comprehensive understanding of the socioeconomic impacts of offshore energy development along Maine's coast.

In her article "Sacrifice Along the Energy Continuum: A Call for Energy Justice," Diana Hernández aptly states, "The ability to meet rising domestic and global energy demands at a reasonable rate often comes with environmental and human costs." We firmly believe that environmental and energy justice begin with a thorough comprehension of who will be impacted, both positively and negatively. The authors of this bill have invested time crafting a document aiming to mitigate some of the adverse effects of offshore energy development. We are grateful for their considerable efforts. Specifically, we appreciate the inclusion of priorities such as responsibly sited offshore wind energy development, minimization of impacts on wildlife, habitat, fisheries, and coastal communities, monitoring of marine environment impacts, and the promotion of diversity, equity, inclusion, and equitable distribution of economic benefits.

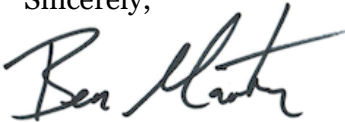
Without the requisite information to make informed judgments and weigh offshore wind development proposals, we cannot in good conscience support L.D. 1895, given our role as stewards of the ocean ecosystem and Maine's small businesses. We also contend that this bill fails to equip the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) with the necessary tools, knowledge, and representation to appropriately adjudicate proposals, assess benefit packages, evaluate ecosystem and community impacts, and gauge technology suitability.

Maine boasts the highest number of boats undertaking fishing trips in the contiguous United States. Offshore wind development possesses the potential to significantly disrupt the marine ecosystem and Maine's fishing communities if it is not done correctly. In our haste to deploy unproven and uncertain technology on our waters, we risk losing sight of the tremendous opportunities and food resources that our ecosystem offers to Maine's fishermen, seafood enthusiasts, and all of Maine's citizens. Irrespective of individual perspectives on developing the Gulf of Maine for energy production, it is imperative that we comprehend the potential impacts of this transition and adequately support affected communities in grappling with the consequences of such development.

In conclusion, we oppose L.D. 1895: An Act Regarding the Procurement of Energy from Offshore Wind Resources, in its current form and any updated language that falls short of providing the PUC with the essential tools, knowledge, and representation needed to evaluate proposals comprehensively. We implore you to reconsider the bill and ensure that we have a complete understanding of the potential impacts of offshore wind development before proceeding.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We greatly appreciate your dedication and commitment to the well-being of Maine's coastal communities and its invaluable natural resources. Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Ben Martens
Executive Director