



Testimony of the Island Institute In Support of LD 1023, Resolve to Reestablish and Continue the Work of the Blue Economy Task Force

March 27, 2025

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, Members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Nick Battista and I am testifying on behalf of the Island Institute in support of LD 1023 and generally in strong support of continuing the Blue Economy Task Force to support Maine's emergence as a center for blue economy innovation and opportunity in the 21st century. I was involved with the Blue Economy Task Force that developed the first draft of the report and believe there is additional important work to be done.

The Island Institute is a 40-year-old nonprofit organization based in Rockland, Maine. Island Institute's work focuses on building economic, climate, and community resilience in support of Maine's island and coastal communities. We work with communities where 1 in 5 residents hold a lobster license, and access to a robust working waterfront is critical to the survival of businesses and the economic well-being of families.

The State of Maine, and specifically coastal and island communities, have been subject to negative impacts of climate-related events, as in the January 2024 storms, economic uncertainty felt through the 2009 recession and again during the 2020 pandemic, and current uncertainty of federal tariffs of which the impacts are not yet known. Continued attention and support to blue economy businesses – particularly those outside of the seafood world that do not have existing roadmaps or plans.

The Island Institute is actively helping support businesses in the blue economy with advanced workforce training and skills building in marine electrification and aquaculture, support for resilient working waterfront infrastructure, and a new small business support program "Future of Fishing" to support the lobster industry in improving their business skills or diversifying into new blue economy related businesses.

Please support LD 1023 and the advancement of a resilient, blue economy in Maine.