

March 27, 2025

The Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development
Testimony of Alison Feibel, Acadian Seaplants Maine

In Support of LD 1023

LD 1023, Resolve, to Reestablish and Continue the Work of the Maine Blue Economy Task Force

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development.

My name is Alison Feibel. I am a resident of Belfast and am honored to testify in support of LD 1023. As the Senior Resource Biologist with Acadian Seaplants, I was pleased to participate as a member of the current Blue Economy Task Force. Acadian Seaplants is a fully-integrated bio-tech manufacturer of premium seaweed products for plants, animals, and people, has been harvesting seaweed in Maine since 2002 and is part of the state's blue economy.

The report the Task Force presented was developed via consensus by a large group of stakeholders. Those findings and recommendations are important to Maine's ability to accelerate its support for the blue economy. As the report highlights, and as you've heard today, Maine is uniquely positioned to be a leader in the blue economy. The report recommends establishing a Maine Center for the Blue Economy, streamlining regulatory processes, prioritizing investment in blue economy research and development, expanding workforce training and education programs, and strengthening working waterfronts and coastal infrastructure. LD1023 would allow the Task Force to develop more concrete deliverables that focus on these recommendations.

Two of the sectors the Blue Economy Task Force report highlighted as primed for high economic growth are the Marine Vegetation and Marine Biotechnology sectors. An example of how this is true is that Maine has the largest commercial seaweed industry in the US and is the only state in the country that has a commercial rockweed industry (a type of seaweed). We compete on a global scale with other countries around the North Atlantic. Seaweed products have long been used in agriculture, but new technologies and applications have made these products even more beneficial, reducing the use of synthetic based fertilizers on our farms. We want Maine to be at the forefront of developing these technologies.

Your support of LD1023, with some amendments, will allow the Task Force to continue its important work, focusing on the recommendations laid out in the report, some of which you have heard today. Work which will help Maine take advantage of its many opportunities and help provide economic growth opportunities in our coastal communities.

Thank you.