

The Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development  
Testimony of Dr. Beth N. Orcutt, Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences

**In Support of LD 1023**

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

March 27, 2025

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

**Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences is pleased to support the initiative represented in LD 1023 presented by Senator Duson of Cumberland and co-sponsored by our Boothbay Representative Holly Stover.** We welcome efforts to continue the work of the Maine Blue Economy Task Force to advise our state on strategic decisions to encourage the acceleration of blue economy jobs and solutions. We believe that such strategies are urgently necessary for Maine to keep pace with other states in this sector. We also believe that Maine has many unique strengths and advantages to allow blue economy job creation across the state, especially for rural communities.

I am pleased to have served as a member of the Maine Blue Economy Task Force, which earlier this year submitted a collaboratively produced report to the Governor and State Legislature. The report defined Maine’s “blue economy” as a sustainable and equitable ocean economy that optimizes innovation to expand economic opportunities in our coastal communities, grounded in Maine’s unique marine heritage, research expertise, and location. The report further clarified that the blue economy is a subset of all industries related to the ocean. This subset includes things you might naturally think of — such as seafood, shipbuilding, eco-tourism and renewable offshore energy — and also some things that might not be on your radar, such as biotechnology developed from the ocean, ocean data acquisition and analysis, marine research more broadly, and seaweed-based products. **The report identified that marine research, marine biotechnology, ocean data, and seaweed-based products are key areas with high economic growth potential for our state, alongside aquaculture, boatbuilding, and marine propulsion.** Maine has a wealth of renowned public and private research institutions that are leading innovations and skilled workforce development to support new blue economy opportunities in these high growth areas.

The report also highlighted key obstacles that are holding back blue economy development in Maine and allowing other states to outcompete us. The Task Force particularly highlights that Maine lags other states in making key investments that kickstart innovation. **Strategic investment of state funds can unlock investment from private sources that underpin job creation.** This includes the idea presented in the report to support development of a public-



private “hub” to organize and align the state’s geographically dispersed stakeholders around a singular state strategy to drive innovation and attract and retain high-paying jobs across our state, ensuring prosperity for rural communities.

This report delivered on February 1 was a first step; more work urgently remains to be done. Our organization is eager to continue engagement with partners across the state, focusing our energy to accelerate job creation in Maine. **We look forward to participating in future workshops on this bill to align the bill’s deliverables with the recommendations of the report and support the inclusion of a modest fiscal note to continue to engage the consultant team.**

Thank you for all that you do for Maine – we appreciate you.

Sincerely,



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