

**LD 1286**

**Resolve, to Establish the Blue Economy Task Force to Support Maine's Emergence as a  
Center for Blue Economy Innovation and Opportunity in the 21st Century**

**Testimony Neither In Support Nor In Opposition**

**Joint Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business**

**Public Hearing**

**April 11, 2023**

Senator Curry, Chair; Representative Roberts, Chair; and Honorable Committee Members:

My name is Jacquelyn Elliott. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony for **LD 1286 NEITHER IN SUPPORT OR AGAINST**. For almost thirty years I have advocated for waste management policy that protects the environment, public health, and the rights of impacted communities. Waste is a verb and something we choose to do – whether it be what we throw away or how we use our water resources. It can be agreed that clean water resources are vital for sustaining life. Water resources are not infinite and the supply is increasingly fragile due to continued abuse.

We can allow that here in Maine we are living the reality that our choices matter. Maine citizens are experiencing the unfolding nightmare of water contaminated with PFAS forever toxic chemicals. There is a scramble to discover if there are effective ways to reclaim those poisoned waters. That remains an unanswered question. What is evident is that our precious water resources need our care. Decision makers with the power and responsibility have not yet met the challenge of conserving and stewarding Maine's valuable and irreplaceable water resources increasingly dominated by powerful vested interests. Recently, **LD 1111** was before the **Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology** with the intent of shifting the paradigm of how Maine's water resources are used and protected.

Currently Maine does not have the legal infrastructure in place to protect our water resources and communities from extractive, exploitive, and polluting abuses. The Legislature has not yet moved to replace "Absolute Dominion" or "Absolute Capture" laws

that provide the corporate and investor sectors significant legal advantage over local communities' and environmental interests. It can be assumed; venture capital is pushing us to grow fish on land instead of bringing our inland waterways and oceans back to good health. The model of aquaculture being promoted, like [Nordic Aquafarms in Belfast](#),<sup>1</sup> requires a tremendous amount of groundwater and creates a waste stream that would significantly add to the existing stresses facing our warming ocean and surface waters. As previously noted, the emerging PFAS issue; bottled water extraction and exports; metallic mining pressures; and an increase in the privatization of municipal water systems all add threats to the sustainability of our finite and valuable water resources.

Maine is attracting the interest of blue economy entrepreneurs and investors due to the State's clean and cold waters. Maine needs economic development that values what is irreplaceable and upholds the rights of those who live here. This bill has potential to be precarious and should be put on pause for many reasons. Not the least of which, this bill gives preeminence to the private sector over water sources and the environment we depend upon for survival. The composition of the proposed task force raises concerns with appointed members weighted to promote vested interests and lacking meaningful participation from potentially impacted citizens. The task force is charged to “overcome potential technical, economic, regulatory and other challenges to expand the blue economy . . . [and make] recommendations to amend environmental and investment rules and regulations.” As a citizen who has been involved in long-time advocacy, this is a familiar model that raises flags. The outcome from endeavors so structured, has seldom resulted in sustainability and justice.

Thank you for considering my comments and I would ask the Committee to **carefully consider their dispensation of LD 1286.**

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<sup>1</sup> Bever, Fred, February 12, 2020, Maine Public, Belfast Residents Express Concerns About Environmental Impacts Of Proposed Land-Based Salmon Farm  
<https://www.mainepublic.org/business-and-economy/2020-02-12/belfast-residents-express-concerns-about-environmental-impacts-of-proposed-land-based-salmon-farm>