



JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



HEATHER JOHNSON
COMMISSIONER

April 11, 2023

**TESTIMONY OF VICTORIA FOLEY, DIRECTOR OF LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS & COMMUNICATIONS
FOR THE MAINE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, REGARDING
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"**

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business (IDEA), my name is Victoria Foley, and I am the Director of Legislative Affairs and Communications for DECD. I am submitting this testimony neither for nor against Senator Duson's Resolve, LD 1286, "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."

Senator Duson's proposal calls for the creation of a 23-person task force to develop a strategy and recommend a specific action plan to accelerate the State's emergence as an important contributor to the sustainable use of the ocean's resources for economic health, improved livelihoods and jobs and ecosystem health, referred to as the blue economy. The strategy should identify the State's current and potential future opportunities and challenges in the blue economy.

I think we can all agree that our economy is heavily reliant on our ocean-based blue economy. We need to make every effort to ensure that we are tirelessly monitoring and assessing the challenges that may imperil it and the opportunities that will sustain and grow it. While this proposal seeks to tackle these issues, there is another effort currently underway that has been engaged in this effort since 2020. The SEAMaine initiative is a \$2.5 million federally funded effort to address many of the priorities in this Resolve. It is an industry-led initiative that includes 30-50 stakeholders from Maine's commercial fishing, aquaculture, and seafood economy. The group is developing a "roadmap and action plan for economic growth, market and workforce development, and greater resiliency in Maine's seafood economy." Over the past three years, SEAMaine has generated a lot of data and [reports](#) that are informing the final roadmap product. They expect to complete the roadmap by the fall.

SEAMaine's project goals include creating economic growth and resiliency in Maine's seafood economy by:

Providing support to sustain Maine's existing marine resource businesses by growing and diversifying markets for Maine seafood.

Supporting the needs of today and the future of workforce in Maine's marine economy

59 STATE HOUSE STATION • AUGUSTA • MAINE • 04333-0059

PHONE: (207) 624-9800 • FACSIMILE: (207) 287-2681

WWW.MAINE.GOV/DECD



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Attracting investment and talent in the seafood economy to support new technology and product development in the sector.

Strengthening Maine's coastal communities through the preservation and improvements of our working waterfronts.

Increasing the amount and value of marine living resources originating from Maine's coastal waters in a way that minimizes the carbon footprint of the marine resource sector, increases competitiveness of Maine businesses, and maximizes resiliency and diversification

While the proposed task force envisions some additional activities, we have some concern about a duplication of efforts. Given that the SEAMaine roadmap is expected to be released this fall and will include a strategy and action plan as contemplated by this bill, we would respectfully ask that this legislation be carried over to the Second Regular Session so that the learnings from the three-plus-year SEAMaine effort can help inform any future task force that is created to assist Maine's blue economy. This will help us all avoid the risk of duplication of efforts. The additional time provided by a carryover would also allow further discussion of the options for staffing such an effort, which would currently be a concern for the agencies identified.

For your review, I would encourage you to visit the SEAMaine website at www.seamaine.org to find out more information about the ongoing effort.

Thank you for your time and consideration, I am happy to address any questions or concerns you may have.