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*Testimony of Representative Morgan Rielly in support of*

### **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**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business*

Good afternoon Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and distinguished members of the Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business. My name is Morgan Rielly, and I represent House District 127, which includes part of Westbrook. I am here to testify in support of **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**

Outside of the legislature, I work as a farmhand on oyster farms. And when the session ends, I will be back out on the water working for a farm in Brunswick. I got my first experience in aquaculture with two hard-working farmers in Harpswell, who opened my eyes to Maine's Blue Economy, with its incredible opportunities for meaningful work that is connected to Maine's natural beauty and beneficial for our environment. There is no better feeling, and no better way to know you've had a good day, than the smell of the ocean as you traverse across Casco Bay and some mud on your sleeves from lifting bags of oysters out of cages.

LD 1286 establishes the Blue Economy Task Force to Support Maine's Emergence as a Center for Blue Economy Innovation and Opportunity in the 21st Century.

The Blue Economy encompasses the practice of the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs, while preserving the health of community members and our environment. A Blue Economy Task Force should also examine how Maine can ensure that our working waterfront is equitable and encourages the inclusion of women,

indigenous peoples, historically marginalized or underrepresented groups, veterans, young people, and local communities to participate in.

A core part of our Blue Economy is Maine's aquaculture industry, which is a cornerstone of our state's identity. Further, our economy relies upon this industry. In Maine, there is growing interest in better understanding how we can grow and harvest our seafood in more sustainable ways, while increasing job production in the industry. Now is the time for us to further support this industry for the betterment of all Maine people.

Beyond being a growing export, Maine's aquaculture industry has the potential to be restorative to our coastline as many of the shellfish grown help filter our water, to have a positive impact on the environment, to mitigate the effects of climate change and to contribute to sustainable food production. There is a bright future in our Blue Economy, and we must take the necessary steps to examine how Maine can be a leader in this space.

Thank you for your consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.