

**Testimony from the University of Maine  
Submitted by Vice President of Strategic Partnerships and Innovation Jake Ward 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, April 11, 2023**

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Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business: My name is Jake Ward and I am the Vice President of Strategic Partnerships and Innovation for the University of Maine, writing to inform your consideration 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*.

Maine's Blue Economy represents the sustainable use of the ocean's resources for economic vitality and growth, and it is a foundation of both the past and future for Maine's many coastal and near-coastal communities, and our overall state economy. Nationally and internationally, there is increasing awareness of the Blue Economy and the growing opportunities it offers to support natural solutions to address many product, food, material and energy challenges; support employment and economic growth; and advance sustainability and resiliency.

This bill is intended to further Maine as a key player in this emerging and expanding global trend. As Maine's Blue Economy continues to evolve and establish its place in the broader Blue Economy, the state has, and will continue, to take a leadership role to manage a sustainable economic opportunity while protecting the incredible natural Gulf of Maine resources.

The R1 University of Maine — a land, sea and space grant institution — has been a strong supporter and accelerator of Maine's Blue Economy for well over a century. Our talented faculty, staff and students — in collaboration with communities, state and federal agencies, non-profit organizations and companies — have participated in every aspect of the current Blue Economy. Our efforts include state and federally funded research and development (R&D), product development, business incubation, entrepreneurial development, workforce development, stakeholder engagement, community support, and close partnership with every entity named in LD 1286. This marine work is supported in part by the State's investment in university R&D through the Maine Economic Improvement Fund, which leverages additional resources from federal and private grants and contracts. A great example is Marine Skincare, a start-up launched by UMaine students with mentoring and support from our student innovations center, that is making skin-care products from lobster processing wastes and marketing their products throughout the United States.

In addition to supporting the R&D, product development and community support, UMaine faculty, staff and students have led or participated in all of Maine's marine-related economic development plans, roadmaps and strategies including SEA Maine, the Maine Aquaculture Roadmap 2022-2023 and the Maine Climate Action Plan. We thank Sen. Duson and her bipartisan cosponsors for bringing this bill forward. If the Blue Economy Task Force is established by LD 1286, UMaine welcomes participating as we continue to enhance Maine's economy, global competitiveness, quality of life and resources, and community resilience through leadership and innovation in the Blue Economy.