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April 18th, 2023

LD 1487 Written Testimony – Joint Innovation Development, Economic Advancement and Business Committee

Rob Brown – Clark Marine – Oppose or Amend

Thank you, Chairman Curry, Chairwoman Roberts, and members of the joint committee on Innovation Development, Economic Advancement and Business for the opportunity to share my perspective on this important piece of legislation.

My name is Rob Brown, and I live in Randolph, Maine. I am a small business owner, a certified technician, and a father of four, with a 2-year-old grandchild and probably more on the way. I am extremely fortunate to be able to enjoy the outdoors through my business, Clark Marine, which owns and operates three locations across Maine – in Manchester, Monmouth, and Belgrade. We service 2800-3000 boats and engines each season, and help keep families out on the water, enjoying the precious and limited time we have each year to use our boats.

I offer this background because I can testify firsthand on the effects that so-called “Right to Repair” legislation would have on my business, and my customers.

First, it is important for me to highlight that although a major cornerstone of my business is indeed service, Clark Marine prides itself already in providing our customers with the tools, parts, and manuals to complete basic repairs. Marine Dealers understand that some simple repairs can and should be done by the customer, however, Certified Technicians like myself are crucial for ensuring safety and compliance during more complex repairs.

Second, in the Marine world the smallest details matter most. These engines and electronics are complex and the use of an incorrect “will fit” part will compromise the safety of the vessel and put at risk the operators, their families, and anyone nearby. For example, Ignition-Protected Marine Electronic Components are crucial component to ensure safety and reliability in marine products. These components are primarily used near fuel tanks and in areas on vessels where fuel fumes may be present and accumulate. Unlike traditional fuses and circuit breakers, ignition protected components are designed to keep any potential sparks generated by a blown fuse or shorted circuit from escaping. This ultimately prevents the ignition of fuel vapors. This is just one of many examples of the knowledge certified technicians have to keep consumers and their families safe after a repair.

Allowing consumers, the ability to repair all aspects of a marine engine could spell disaster. Boaters depend on their equipment to operate correctly when they are enjoying their time out on the water. Unfortunately, this bill could cause boaters to be stranded out on the water without a working engine to get them back home. Not only would this pose a major threat to safety in deteriorating weather conditions, it would also damage the confidence consumers put into manufacturers and dealers in my industry.

It is important to keep in mind that recreational boating is the largest economic contributor to the outdoor recreation industry in Maine, contributing nearly \$2 billion to the state's GDP. As we all know, there is no shortage of ways to enjoy Maine's beautiful outdoors, and ultimately passing this legislation would push consumers out of our market and into other forms of recreation, dramatically affecting seasonal businesses like mine.

Simply put, certified technicians provide insight that non certified technicians or lay people cannot. They are educated, experienced experts in their field. When we want something fixed that could affect our lives, we go to someone who is expertly trained in the field to repair it. Why then, would we pass a bill that could potentially put boaters and their families at risk? Furthermore, as an industry we are striving to give the consumer a better experience by having certified technicians work on specific engines, and keep them out on the water and spending less time in the shop.

I appreciate your consideration of these concerns, and respectfully ask this committee to oppose LD 1487, or amend the bill to exclude off-road vehicles, including marine engines and electronics. I thank you again for your time and hope to see you on the water this boating season!

Robin E Brown Owner
Clark Marine