



March 22, 2023

The Honorable David LaFountain
Senate Chair
Joint Committee on Inland Fisheries & Wildlife
3 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

The Honorable Scott Landry
House Chair
Joint Committee on Inland Fisheries & Wildlife
2 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: LD 693– An Act to Protect Inland Water Quality, Shorelines, Wildlife and Public Safety by Prohibiting Operation of a Wake Boat to Create an Enhanced Wake Close to Shore or in Shallow Water

Position: Oppose

Dear Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry, and members of the Joint Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, my name is Chad Tokowicz and I am the Government Relations Manager for the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas (MRAA). I am writing today in opposition to LD 693– An Act to Protect Inland Water Quality, Shorelines, Wildlife and Public Safety by Prohibiting Operation of a Wake Boat to Create an Enhanced Wake Close to Shore or in Shallow Water.

The Marine Retailers Association of the Americas (MRAA) is the leading trade association of North American small businesses that sell and service new and pre-owned recreational boats and operate marinas, boatyards, and accessory stores. MRAA represents more than 1,300 individual member retail locations and conducts advocacy efforts on their behalf. The MRAA is proud to have 6 Maine members and works in close collaboration with the Maine Marine Trades Association on a variety of overlapping policy priorities.

Although known as the Pine Tree State, Maine boasts an impressive array of both freshwater and saltwater resources, providing an almost endless number of opportunities for aquatic recreation while acting as the backbone to Maine's outdoor recreation economy. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, recreational boating and fishing brought more than \$406,996,000 to Maine in 2021. Furthermore, according to data from the National Marine Manufacturer's Association, recreational boating alone in Maine supported 14,072 jobs at 592 businesses.

The MRAA is in opposition to LD 693 due to concerns with enforceability, cost, and the belief, that at this time, proper education can come to the same end as the regulations proposed in LD 693. With more than 2,290 square miles of inland water areas, water safety assets of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife are already spread thin and if passed the provisions within LD 693 will further stress these limited resources. Before passing LD 693, the MRAA urges the Committee to consider how effective the enforcement of the current “Water Safety Zone”, at 200 feet from shore, is. Furthermore, the MRAA wants to highlight the challenges associated with “Wake Safety Zones” and call attention to the cost, maintenance, as well as enforcement. Will these “Wake Safety Zones” be marked and maintained by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, or will this be delegated to local stakeholders? Furthermore, who will then be responsible for their enforcement? Regardless, this will result in a considerable burden on time and finances for the responsible party which could likely be used, instead, to educate boaters and gain a more profound understanding of the potential impacts of aquatic recreation.

Instead of passing LD 693, the MRAA suggests that the Committee focus on gaining a better understanding of the current impact water sports, other recreational activities, and environmental factors (ex. wind driven waves) have on Maine’s inland waterbodies. The MRAA believes it is important to gain a full understanding of the current state of Maine’s aquatic resources before putting in place any regulation that will limit access of a fledgling recreational activity.

In the meantime, the MRAA encourages the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to work with all impacted stakeholders to develop an educational campaign to help educate boaters on safe, responsible, and proper operation of all recreational vessels on Maine lakes, while stressing the importance of adhering to Maine’s current setback of 200 feet from shore and islands.

Lastly, if the Committee does wish to proceed with LD 693, the MRAA encourage the Committee to consider similar action to that taken by the 129th Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife regarding LD 695, and create a stakeholder group to fully explore the implications of the proposed regulation as well as potential regulatory and non-regulatory solutions.

Again, for the reasons above, the MRAA urges the Committee to oppose LD 693 and instead focus on education and gaining a better understanding of current impacts to Maine’s inland water resources. If you have any questions, or would like to involve the MRAA in any further stakeholder discussion, please reach out to Chad Tokowicz, MRAA Government Relations Manager, at 978-569-5127 or Chad@mraa.com.

Sincerely,



Chad Tokowicz
Government Relations Manager
Marine Retailers Association of the Americas