

Testimony of Jim Williams in favor of
LD 1042, An Act to Require a Person Operating a Watercraft for Recreational
Purposes to Ensure All Passengers Under 13 Years of Age to Wear Coast
Guard Approved Personal Flotation Devices

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

Good morning, Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee, my name is Jim Williams. I reside on the New Meadows River, east Casco Bay in the Town of West Bath. I am a long-time recreational boater, hold a USCG Masters "Captains" License, am a Master Maine Guide and an instructor for the United States Power Squadron.

First, I wanted to talk about the terms used to describe the age at which a Personal Flotation device (PFD) or Life Jacket must be worn. Some States say under age 13 and some say age 12 & under or 12 & younger. The term the Coast Guard uses is "Under 13" and LD 1042 uses "have not attained the age of 13". They all mean the same thing.

IFW Rule 13.05 now requires children aged 10 & under to wear a life jacket while on the water. LD 1042 requires 11 & 12 year-olds to also wear a life jacket. "Under 13" is the age the Coast Guard uses. "Under 13" is also what $\frac{3}{4}$ (three fourths) of the U.S. coastal states (including D.C.) use and require. (See map on Page 2).

Life Jackets today are not the bulky uncomfortable PFD's of the past. They are lightweight, come in many sizes, are reasonably priced, are available in inflatable or non-inflatable versions and have many variations of colors and themes. Life Jackets must be on board the boat anyway, we are just asking that children wear them until they are 13 years old.

Passage of this bill will help protect children for an additional two years while recreationally boating. Odds are much greater that a child will survive a sinking, accident, or capsize if a life jacket is being worn. Drowning is the leading cause (75%) of deaths while boating and in 87% of drowning deaths a life jacket was not being worn. It just makes sense to follow the Coast Guard's lead and protect our children for another 2 years. And there is no added cost to the State or the boater!

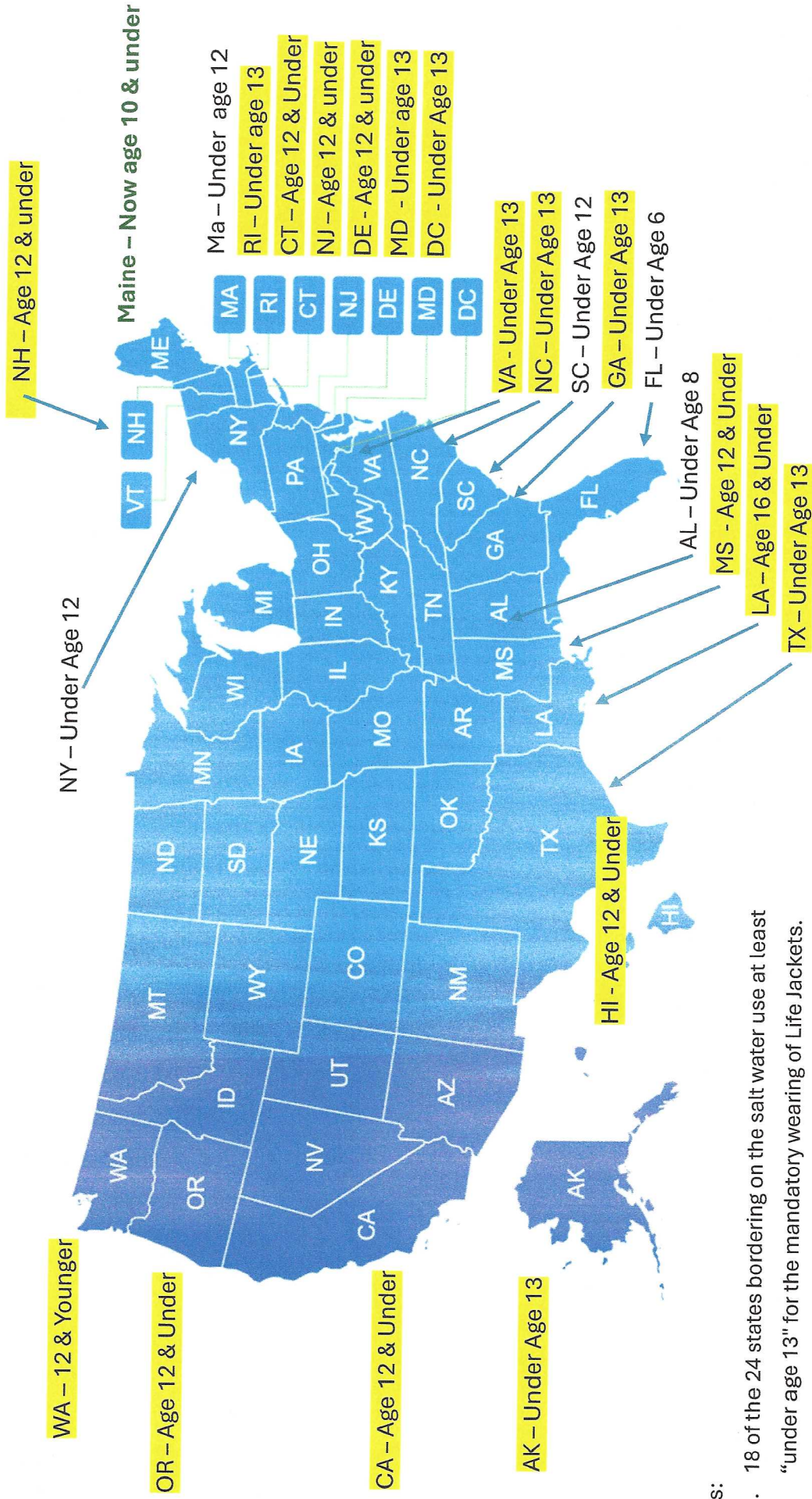
I urge you to support the passage of this legislation.
Thank you for this opportunity to speak before you today.
I'd be pleased to answer any questions from the Committee.

Respectfully,

Jim Williams
West Bath, Maine

Age requirements for Children to wear Life Jackets / Personal Floatation Devices for Ocean (salt water) Bordering States

Yellow Highlighted States are at least under 13



Notes:

1. 18 of the 24 states bordering on the salt water use at least "under age 13" for the mandatory wearing of Life Jackets.
2. About 116,800 recreational boats are registered in Maine.
Not including kayaks, paddleboards, paddle propelled canoes, dinghy's, and rowboats.