

Nicola Stanley
Searsmont
LD 1763

To whom it may concern:

I am writing regarding LD 1763 - An Act to Regulate Nonwater-dependent Floating Structures on Maine's Waters.

My name is Nicola Stanley and I'm a lifelong Mainer. I've been getting out on the water in Maine since childhood, and in the past decade I've spent several years working on and near the water: as a deckhand on a mooring barge and a crane barge; and as a yacht carpenter at French and Webb in Belfast, and Rockport Marine in Rockport.

I am entirely in favor of reducing water pollution of all kinds in Maine; however, I feel that this bill is a clumsy and heavy-handed approach to doing so, and the text of the bill gives the impression that it was written more to benefit wealthy shorefront property owners concerned about their views than to ensure clean water for the benefit of all Mainers.

It seems to be scapegoating independently-built floating structures for issues that go along with any water craft, of any size and manufacture (and one might argue many waterfront homes as well). I feel really frustrated that the legislature is spending time considering a ban on floating structures at the low-budget (and low-discharge!) end of the spectrum when it could be spending that time looking at the bigger picture— i.e. considering how to ameliorate the environmental impact of cruise ships, or overdevelopment of shorelines.

I know a handful of skilled folks who have made thoughtful and well-built floating structures because they could not afford access to Maine's coastal waters otherwise. These houseboats/floating camps do not have a "means of propulsion" or "doors and windows constructed or designed for marine use" or "an assigned hull identification number" and yet they add more aesthetic value and pose fewer environmental and navigational hazards than many poorly-maintained watercraft afloat in this state.

Please don't place a prohibitive burden of regulatory hurdles on the small number of people in this state who have the enterprise and creativity to build a cabin or camp or sauna and set it afloat. This is a Maine tradition...just like ice shacks.

It seems like a better way to go about regulating nonwater-dependent structures would be to enforce or better regulate anchoring and mooring (which many towns in Maine already do). A poorly-maintained watercraft on an inadequate anchor or mooring has the potential to cause more pollution (waste leakage, fuel leakage, debris) and more hazards to other boats and boaters (if it drags anchor or the mooring fails) than a homebuilt-houseboat on a municipally sanctioned, regularly-inspected mooring.

Finally, given the crisis in affordable housing in this state, especially in Maine's coastal communities, please don't ban the option of floating housing for the small community of folks for whom it is an affordable, accessible solution.

Thank you for your consideration.

Nicola Stanley,
Searsmont, Maine