

Cathryn Bigley
Freeport

My name is Cathryn Bigley. I have heard the cry and overgeneralization that it's the wealthy people from away that are complaining about aquaculture. I am not a millionaire, I'm not from away and I am not opposed to aquaculture when it is done right. I am from Maine and I am a school counselor so you're probably wondering why I am here today.

Four generations of my family have lived in modest homes near the ocean in Maine. We are grateful to live by the ocean and feel an obligation to protect it.

When 16 acres of aquaculture was being proposed in the space that we, and so many others use regularly near our home, I had to learn and understand the DMR system very quickly. It's a popular location where people like me kayak, tube, sail, water ski, kneeboard and motor boat in Casco Bay. But more than recreation, it's where people such as shellfish harvesters, striped bass fishermen and sea kayak tour guides make a living.

I learned very quickly that 95% of all leases are granted by DMR

The rules and regulations have set a nice table for aquaculture without considering lobstermen, shellfish harvesters, striped bass fishermen and recreational tour companies. I learned very quickly that fighting an aquaculture lease becomes a full time job. One that requires funding, legal representation, lots of time and research, and expert witnesses to provide testimony.

I learned that it's critical to find every single person that uses the water and the flats in that location to come and testify at the hearing

I learned that there is a lot of conflict on the water because of aquaculture leases. Fishermen and harvesters have to attend hearings to protect the water/flats that they use regularly in order to continue to be able to use that area to make a living.

I have witnessed people get threatened and get into physical altercations at hearings.

I learned that the criteria is vague and leaves much up to the interpretation of one person at DMR to decide the fate of so many

I learned that one person, business, or corporation can own up to a 1,000 acres of Maine's oceans which is a public trust.

I learned that leases can go right up against one another leaving zero room in between for navigation or fishing

Aquaculture is growing so fast. Leases are getting bigger and bigger, popping up here and there and it impacts the livelihood of so many others without much thought into how all of these fisheries are going to interact

1,000 acres is too much; 20 years is too long

This bill is the beginning and it allows all voices to be part of the conversation about Maine's water in a way that is more fair and equitable.

We need a new permitting framework that is impartial, considers all industries and recreation, and protects the coast of Maine.

Thank you for your time.