

Testimony in Support of LD 1146, An Act to Protect Maine's Ocean Waters and Support Regulatory Oversight and the Long-term Health of the Aquaculture Industry

Senator Miramant, Representative McCreight and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources

Good morning. My name is Jerilyn Bowers and I am a resident of Hancock, Maine and I am pleased to offer testimony in support for LD1146. Like many of you, I have deep and abiding ties to this state and its rugged coastline. Seven generations of my family have made their living in Frenchman Bay and the Gulf of Maine as cod hand liners, herring seiners, clambers and lobsterman. Ensuring that future generations of Mainers have the opportunity to continue this noble tradition is vitally important to me.

In recent years, modifications to statewide rules and regulations designed to manage the growth of aquaculture in Maine have been significantly relaxed. These include:

- Increasing the aggregate number of acres that can be leased by an entity from 250 to 1,000;
- Increasing the terms of a lease from 10 years to 20;
- Allowing the transfer of a lease from one entity to another without a public hearing, and without addressing guarantees to future compliance with the initial criteria

In addition, there is no limit on the total number of leases that can be granted in a specific area and no mechanism in place to assess the cumulative impact of these leases on water quality, navigation, fishing, and ecologically significant flora and fauna.

These modifications have resulted in an influx of large, industrial-scale lease applications, many five to six times larger than the existing aquaculture leases along Maine's coastline. One recent example of this is the application submitted by American Aquafarms, a Norwegian based company incorporated in Wyoming, for a 60-acre finfish farm in the middle of Frenchman's Bay.

As the approval of aquaculture lease applications reaches an all-time high, I believe it is time for a broader conversation about whether or not the current rules and regulations governing aquaculture activity along the Maine coast are adequate to protect our local waters and way of life. It is my belief that LD1146 is an important first step in allowing us to do just that.

Thank you.

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