

Greetings Senator Miramant, Representative McCreight, Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources; Thank you for letting me speak today. My name is Joanna Fogg. I live in Bar Harbor and my husband and I are the owners of Bar Harbor Oyster Company. We've been growing oysters in Frenchman Bay since 2014.

I'm here to ask you to vote "ought not to pass" on LD 1146. This bill is being put forward by a group that opposes aquaculture and its growth in the State of Maine. The language in the bill is intentionally vague and deceptive and it could do a great deal of damage to those of us who are trying to make a living on a working waterfront.

One of the things this bill intends to do is task the DMR to hold yet another round of stakeholder meetings to determine a "statewide plan" for aquaculture. As someone who appreciates, information and science and the health of this coastline and its communities I originally thought, "what could be wrong with a study or a plan? Don't we want to be sure that the aquaculture sector is growing responsibly?" But the truth is we don't need a study. Maine has conducted dozens of studies over the past few decades. Another study is just going to clog up the leasing system and slow things down for farmers regardless of their size. This bill assumes the leasing and management system is broken and it's not. There are strict criteria for getting a lease and the DMR does an exceptional job managing the sector. What they need is more resources so they can continue to do this as it grows sustainably, not an expensive study that will add more to their workload.

I am so worried that this is truly an issue of wealthy landowners, with deep pockets, paying people to manipulate the system because they don't want to look at sea farms. If this is not a case of gentrification then why won't the group putting this bill forth disclose where their funding is coming from?

LD1146 is a segway to having the aesthetics of sea farms part of the leasing criteria. If this gets put into practice we have a lot to lose. There is a finite amount of water that we can reasonably farm. Aquaculture leases are already only approved if they don't interfere with existing commercial fishing. If sea farms can only exist where they don't affect someone's view, then we won't have sea farms. We won't have Maine oysters, or mussels, kelp, or salmon in our markets, at our restaurants, or in our kitchens. This would not only be a real loss of healthy, sustainable seafood but also the loss of jobs for Maine people, and some of the culture that accompanies them.

Another huge concern I have with LD1146 regards the issue of lease transferability. The bill wants to make it difficult or impossible to transfer a lease. I'll put this into perspective. I was granted a 22-acre, ten-year standard lease in 2016. It took over 2 years for the DMR and the Army Corps to approve it. It takes time because there are scoping sessions, and site reviews, and public hearings and scrutiny to ensure that the lease, if granted, is not going to cause harm. Maine is a gold standard for this. It's how it should be. But then, after being granted a lease it takes at least 3 years to farm a market-size oyster and best case scenario, 6 years before we can turn any profit. In order to get through those 8 start up years we need loans, and now I only have a few years left on my lease. If I can't renew or transfer my lease without going through another lengthy and uncertain process than lenders don't want to back me and I'm not going to float without them. It's that simple.

There are several other things that have me concerned about LD1146 but I believe I've taken up enough of your time. Please know that some of the people who care the most about protecting Maine are the ones on the working waterfront. Thank you, Joanna Fogg

Joanna Fogg  
Bar Harbor Oyster Company

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