

Justin Papkee  
Long Island

April 12, 2021

The Honorable David Miramant, Senate Chair  
The Honorable Jay McCreight, House Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources

Senator Miramant, Representative McCreight, Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in opposition to LD1146. I cannot join this hearing in person to give testimony as I will be in the middle of harvesting my 2021 kelp crop, but I hope you accept my written testimony as a sign of my commitment to supporting responsible aquaculture along our coast.

I am from Long Island in Casco Bay and our community has long relied on fishing. I grew up on the water and knew that, as soon as I finished school, I wouldn't want to be anywhere other than on my own boat to build my career. I fish year round and am keenly aware that the water is changing and the lobster industry is increasingly variable. In the face of even greater threats from regulation, I started looking to other ways that I could make my income on the water.

I got into kelp farming about three years ago as a way to make some money in my slower season. Kelp farming is a great way for me to keep my crew employed all year round while also making some income during the slower season. I can use my boat and my crew to run the entire kelp farm and the lines come out of the water in the spring before the lobster traps are set in shore.

I am a fisherman and an aquaculturist. In my opinion, the two can easily go hand in hand and my income from kelp farming can help offset some of the shocks that are increasingly happening in the lobster industry. In my small community alone, there are three of us that are kelp farming and several others who are getting into oyster farming. This is promising to me as there are limited opportunities for fishermen to get into other fisheries beyond lobster. And lobster fishing is facing a number of different challenges that makes me concerned about the future of my community and our ability to continue to work on the water.

LD1146 is an answer in search of a question – the DMR leasing process is incredibly rigorous and appropriately vets navigational hazards, gear conflict, environmental protection, etc. It also takes a very long time and I'm concerned that this process could slow the leasing process down even further. Many communities that rely on fishing need opportunities to expand and diversify right now – not in 3-5 years (if that is how long leases are going to take to get to approval). We are lucky to live in a state where working waterfronts are continuing to thrive, but we need to continue to plan for the future through diversification into aquaculture if we want to remain on the water. LD 1146 threatens those opportunities to create a more resilient coast and I urge you to vote "ought not to pass" in the case of this bill.

Best,  
Justin Papkee