

Ralph Smith Sr.  
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April 12, 2021

The Honorable David Miramant, Senate Chair  
The Honorable Jay McCreight, House Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources  
Cross Building, Room 206, Augusta, ME. 04333

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

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to speak with you this morning. My name is Ralph Smith Sr. and I live in Jonesport and fish out of Washington and Hancock Counties. I am writing to you today to testify in strong opposition to LD1146, "An Act to Protect Maine's Ocean Waters and Support Regulatory Oversight and the Long-Term Health of the Aquaculture Industry".

I have been in the mussel business since 1975. I founded and continue to operate a family owned business named Moosabec Mussels Inc. which now employs three generations of my family. We grow, harvest, and process mussels locally and sell all over the United States.


I have held bottom cultured mussel leases with the State since 1977. I continue to operate a 90-acre aquaculture lease in Lamoine.

Speaking as a pioneer of the aquaculture leasing system in the State of Maine, the aquaculture industry is very valuable and has created many additional job opportunities for local fishermen and their families.

Moosabec Mussel Inc. used to sell our product solely in bulk to wholesalers located outside of Maine. With the consistency and quality of product that we were able to achieve with the addition of our aquaculture lease, the demand for our product grew over the years. In 1998, we proudly opened a value-added processing facility in our hometown of Jonesport. Since that time, we have been able to create jobs for local talent and we now sell direct to retail through companies such as Whole Foods Markets.

As fisherman we are facing many challenges, right whales, offshore wind development and changing environments are all threatening my ability to continue making a living on the water. LD 1146 is yet another threat that will make it more difficult for me to use aquaculture as a way to diversify my income and adapt to some of the changes I am facing. Although the bill distinguishes between aquaculture operations that are above and below 5 acres, it will have impacts on all lease holders big and small. Please vote "Ought Not To Pass" on LD 1146. Thank you for your patience and willingness to listen to my concerns.

Respectfully,

DocuSigned by:  
  
Ralph Smith Sr.