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Bremen

I oppose LD 1146 because I have been in the aquaculture industry for 10 years. I have risen before dawn for years and worked hard to start my farm. My kelp farm improves local water quality, provides local jobs, provides a delicious and nutritious product, and coexists peacefully next to areas where lobstermen fish. They are my friends and neighbors and we help each other. This bill puts all my hard work and small business at risk.

The current leasing and management system works well. It is not broken. DMR is thorough and efficient.

If aquacultures' exemption to NURPA + site development law is revoked the Maine legislature is strangling the aquaculture industry by forcing us to submit to visual impact/alternative site studies designed to discourage and destroy this industry. The leasing process is already lengthy, intense and demanding. The DMR trainings are rigorous. The system works well to educate and weed out careless potential farmers.

LD 1146 weakens an industry that celebrates a diversity of company size. From individuals like myself to large locally owned companies, diversity makes for a resilient community. Aquaculture sector did well throughout the COVID 19 pandemic because of this diversity. LD 1146 discourages companies from investing and growing.

The language of this bill is intentionally vague and written to encourage the opposition of lobstermen. Wealthy waterfront land-owners, frequently from out of state, are trying to turn the sectors of the working waterfront against each other with this bill. This is toxic for our working waterfront community.

I support the Maine Aquaculture Association and their efforts to find constructive solutions that address concerns while allowing Maine aquaculture businesses to grow.