

Briana Warner
Ocean Approved (DBA Atlantic Sea Farms)

April 12, 2021

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

I am writing today in strong opposition to LD1146. Our entire company is built around the very real idea that fishermen can be the leaders in the aquaculture industry in Maine. This bill threatens the ability to fishermen to continue to diversify into aquaculture and threatens the resilience of our coast – and the threats could be devastating.

Maine is currently one of the nationwide leaders in aquaculture – much of which is being led by Maine’s incredible lobster fishermen. In fact, our own partner farmers, which grow more than 80% of the line-grown kelp grown in the U.S., right here in Maine, are almost all fishermen who farm kelp in their offseason as a form of supplemental income.

As you all know, our coast is almost completely dependent on one species – lobster. Historically, our incredible fishermen in this state have had the opportunity to fish for shrimp, scallops, and groundfish as a compliment to their lobster income. Shellfish and seaweed aquaculture can now act as a replacement of the income that is no longer available to them from these wild fisheries.

This bill stifles the growth of this industry not just for people “from away,” but also limits opportunities for fishermen in our state who are looking to this industry in order to create a more resilient business – and a more resilient coast.

My business, Atlantic Sea Farms, exists for the pure purpose of creating year-round income opportunities for fishermen. Kelp is grown in the lobster off-season and uses much of the same equipment as lobstering. Without access to leases large enough to make a profit, these fishermen would not be able to make money in kelp farming. Furthermore, many are getting into aquaculture to build a long-standing supplemental income source to help absorb some of the shock of the volatility in the lobster industry. We currently work with 22 fishermen from Portland to Eastport and have a waiting list of an 20+ members of the lobster community who would like to farm with us. The demand from the fishing community to get involved in aquaculture is increasing every single year.

The current process for getting leases is fair – and is also complicated and rigorous. These new rules would make it extremely difficult for responsible businesses to get leases and funding to start these leases. This bill could put a

stop to that fair process and, instead slow growth in this sustainable, resilient industry that is creating new jobs in Maine every day.

Aquaculturists throughout the state have operated for more than 30 years without threatening fishermen or riparian landowners. This bill would, in essence, punish the aquaculture industry for doing things right and for creating hundreds (maybe thousands) of jobs along the coast. Not only would my business, and the businesses of our partner fishermen/farmers be threatened, but so would the home-grown mussel, oyster, and scallop businesses that we value so much in the state as regenerative.

For the sake of the economic and environmental resilience of our coastline, I urge you to vote “no” to this bill.

Best,

Briana Warner
CEO/President Ocean Approved, Inc. (DBA Atlantic Sea Farms)