

Testimony in Support of LD 1211, A Resolve to Create the Study Group to Research Balancing Development and Conservation in Maine's Coastal Waters and Submerged Lands

Senator Miramant, Representative McCreight and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources

Good morning. My name is Jerilyn Bowers and I am a resident of Hancock, Maine and I am pleased to offer testimony in support for LD1211. Like many of you, I have deep and abiding ties to this state and its rugged coastline. Seven generations of my family have made their living in Frenchman Bay and the Gulf of Maine-- as cod hand liners, herring seiners, clambers and lobstermen. Ensuring that future generations of Mainers have the opportunity to continue this noble tradition is vitally important to me.

Yet in recent years, I have watched growing development pressures, a changing climate and increased commercial uses of our public waters place additional strain on our fishing communities and threaten their historic way of life.

One only need look at Maine's aquaculture industry as a clear example of the increase in marine-based activity. In 2010 the Department of Marine Resources approved 34 aquaculture leases. In 2020, they approved 216 – a five-fold increase. As Maine's coastal waters become more of a focus of our economic strategies, we must ensure that find the right balance.

Ensuring Maine's abundant natural resources and rich culture continue, while at the same time encouraging appropriate marine-based economic development requires careful planning and a community conversation. LD1211 provides a framework for beginning that process.

One hundred five years ago this year, George Dorr, Charles Eliot and others formally established Acadia National Park. Looking for respite from industrialized metropolitan areas, these leaders understood the value of Maine's exquisite coastline and led the way in creating a lasting legacy for future generations to enjoy.

Today, as our elected leaders, Maine people are looking to you to help ensure the continuation of that legacy and ensure that Maine continues to prosper. We are at a pivotal moment. We must avoid the temptation to sacrifice our long-term sustainability for short-term gain. I believe it is time for a broader conversation about whether or not the current rules and regulations governing the uses of or coastal waters and submerged lands are adequate to protect our local waters and way of life. It is my belief that LD1211 is an important first step in allowing us to do just that.

Thank you.

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