

**TESTIMONY OF
Deirdre Gilbert
Department of Marine Resources**

**The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) is testifying
In Opposition to
LD 1211 Resolve, To Create the Study Group To Research Balancing Development and
Conservation in Maine's Coastal Waters and Submerged Lands
Before the Committee on Marine Resources
Sponsored by Representative Williams
Date of Hearing: May 4, 2021**

Senator Miramant, Representative McCreight, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources, my name is Deirdre Gilbert, Director of State Marine Policy for the Department of Marine Resources, and I am testifying on behalf of the Department in opposition to LD 1211.

The Department was originally contacted this past summer by individuals interested in the potential for legislation creating locally elected regional commissions to participate in all coastal leasing and licensing processes. DMR asked a number of questions and expressed a number of concerns about the rationale for reinventing coastal governance in this manner. The legislation has since evolved to a Resolve creating a 25-person Study Group tasked with eight duties on which they must report by December 1, 2021.

The Department's questions regarding the impetus for undertaking this effort remain. Within the legislation, the Study Group is tasked with researching and reviewing case histories of failures of the current coastal waters and submerged land management system. In our opinion, those should be identified prior to undertaking such an effort, to determine if this Study Group is a necessary use of time and resources. Without a problem articulated, it is not clear whether any issues that may be identified could be addressed by minor modifications to existing permitting processes rather than the wholesale reinvention of coastal governance, as the legislation seems to contemplate with its focus on regional coastal commissions.

Since this legislation has been made public, there has been press that has indicated that this effort is a mechanism to address specific aquaculture proposals such as American Aquafarms and Acadian Aquafarms, as well as cruise ships in Frenchman's bay. However, no representatives of the aquaculture industry are included in the Study Group membership, and neither are there any representatives of the state agencies involved in licensing or permitting of any coastal projects. A member of DMR's Coastal Program is included, but the Coastal Program does not have any permitting or licensing authority.

In conclusion, there is a great deal more work that could be done by proponents to better articulate the problem that such a Study Group is needed to address. Until that occurs, the

Department does not feel such an effort is warranted. Thank you for your consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.