

Testimony To OPPOSE LD 1211

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

My name is Hillevi Jaegerman. I was born and raised in Maine and I reside in Portland. I work for Wolfe Neck Oyster Company. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit this testimony to you this morning. I am testifying to express my strong opposition to LD 1211, “A Resolve, To Create the Study Group to Research Balancing Development and Conservation in Maine's Coastal Waters and Submerged Lands”.

For my job as an oyster farmer I wear many hats. I am one part Marine Biologist, one part conservationist, one part business manager, and one part small-scale farmer. I am early in my career in this field though I have been working within different fields of the industry for almost 10 years and I have found my passion. Recently, I have felt the stability and future of my profession as a vital part of Maine's working waterfront, and of my business, shaken by proposals like LD 1211.

Those that seek to address “current deficiencies in regulation” through this bill are not acknowledging the rigorous policies already in place which successfully achieve a sustainable balance between development and conservation that benefits the state socially, economically, and environmentally. The current regulations are thorough and thoughtful. There are numerous opportunities for public input; there are limits in size, density, location, and disruption to historical use worked into the standing DMR policy.

Please allow me to quickly explain how my small farm of five employees has experienced how well the current regulations work:

Our experimental 1.97 acre lease expired at the end of its term. Contrary to some of the inflammatory messaging out there we by no means own any part of the sea floor. Our lease just allowed us to grow sessile (non-moving) organisms in an exact, limited, and approved location. When our lease expired we were planning to renew for a longer term in the exact same location. We love growing oysters there because they taste and look great. Each oyster grown in Maine is differentiated by the hyper-local environment in which it is grown. However, upon initial inquiries with the DMR we were informed that during our three years farming oysters at that location, the endangered species, eelgrass, had blossomed on and around our farm site. This is just one example where conservation takes precedent. We were happy to re-site our farm to allow the eelgrass to flourish and we hope that our farming and the denitrification of the bay by our filter feeding oysters had something to do with it's resurgence. Consistent and thorough oversight continued as we worked with DMR to find a suitable location to continue working. We adjusted our coordinates to be further from other farmers, shortened the length of the proposed site to adjust for possible boating traffic, and letters were sent to all surrounding land owners (both from DMR and directly from our farm). We are still mid-process over two years later.

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There is no mad rush to grant aquaculture approvals, contrary to what has been said. If we counted the number of alterations, concessions, amendments, and communications we've worked through as denials, we'd have at least four rejected proposals so far (nowhere near the *alleged* 95% approval rate). If anything, a high approval rating simply signifies the quality and rigor demanded of applications in aquaculture to be approved. Unlike the poorly proposed legislation of LD 1211 which would rush to appoint a commission and by December a full report that could lead to shortly conceived legislation... the slow, thorough, and conservative marine resource management in effect today should inspire confidence in the current system.

State wide oversight of Marine Resources works. A regional management system is not in our best interests for the equitable and effective management of marine resources. Additionally, the make-up of the commission body proposed in LD 1211 fails to represent the reality of a diverse stakeholder landscape and doesn't account for geographical representation as it intentionally marginalizes working waterfront groups like aquaculturists and is unfairly focused in the Bar Harbor/ Acadia region.

Please help to protect the vitality of our state, of our people and marine resources, by voting NO on LD 1211.

Thank you for your time. I'd be happy to speak with you further about these issues or to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Hillevi Jaegerman
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