

May 3rd 2021

To Whom It May Concern in The Maine State Legislature,

I am writing in opposition to LD 1211. I am an owner of Maine Ocean Farms, an aquaculture business focused on the cultivation of oysters. I am also an owner of a related marine services business and an ocean farm supply business, as well as a boat builder and merchant mariner. I find myself writing a second testimony in only a matter of weeks to stand up against a second proposed piece of legislation that will greatly impair the ability of my businesses to operate. The amplified voices of special interest groups and wealthy landowners have created an echo chamber of misinformation that seeks to drive a wedge between individual industries of the working waterfront. They shroud ill-intentioned motives behind a guise of environmental protection and heritage preservation when in reality they are merely trying to manipulate the system for their own gains.

Proposed legislation LD 1211 would cripple my aquaculture business. We have already endured over a year of a stalled leasing process due to the pandemic. This potential bill would put forth yet another study and focus group designed to reinvent the wheel, pausing the leasing process even further and subsequently driving most if not all small aquaculture businesses out of operation in the meantime. It is incredibly easy to see that the framework of this proposed bill has been specifically designed to hinder the growth and stability of this specific industry. Instead of working to support and guide a prosperous and promising industry, this bill is asking the legislature to drive another nail in the coffin.

The systems of management and oversight in place today are working well. They are the shining example of how such a system should be set up and many other states have turned to Maine to model their own. We do not need another study session to analyze something that isn't broken. This simply wastes the time and resources of the department tasked with overseeing the working waterfront industries, impairing businesses rather than helping them.

I ask you to please see this proposed bill for what it really is, an ill-intentioned attempt to undermine the aquaculture industry by a special interest opposition group. Please vote in opposition to this bill.

Regards,

Willy Leathers