

5/3/2021

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

I am writing today to testify in 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."

I am a young Mainer, born and raised on our working waterfronts, and I own and operate my own small-scale oyster farm out of my hometown of Freeport called Emily's Oysters. This farm and business are my sole means of income now, and I have poured all of my savings, heart and soul into making Emily's Oysters the successful means of making a living and feeding my community that it has become. I fear that LD 1211, should it pass, would jeopardize my business and livelihood *gravely*, risking all my hard work and investment and those of my fellow aquaculturists as well, particularly other small-scale owner-operators.

I have many of the same concerns about LD 1211 as I did with LD 1146, which you recently (thankfully) voted "ought not pass." This bill is very obviously coming from the same angle – backed by wealthy landowners who are trying to find any way to get a foot in the decision-making process—all so that they don't have to look at aquaculture from their seaside homes.

Chief among my concerns regarding LD 1211 is the brakes that it would put on the aquaculture leasing process. Requiring DMR to spend more time and resources on conducting yet another study would effectively halt the leasing process, which is already at a lengthy 2-3 year wait time. Anything that makes leasing take ANY longer would make it nearly impossible for new AND established farmers alike, especially those who are small-scale businesses like mine, to grow, expand, or transition from experimental LPAs onto a more secure, long-term lease site. I am currently waiting on my own leasing process and speak from experience when I say having to wait any longer or jump through any additional hoops would make this business untenable.

The leasing process as it stands is thorough and effective at making sure aquaculture leases go into places without existing uses. Landowners currently do not and *should* not have a say in where our hardworking fishermen and farmers are allowed to work. Passage of this bill would give them the foothold that they need to force their way into the process and give them a vehicle to submit legislation in the next session, which would undoubtedly be just as if not more dire for my industry. Additionally, shifting from the statewide management system that currently exists to a regionalized system would be obviously counterproductive to ensuring fair, consistent assessment and decision-making when it comes to leasing.

The seafood Maine aquaculturists and fishermen pull out of our ocean is the pride of this state and is among the most sustainable proteins in the world. We are the future of food production, and bills like this are a major threat to that future, to MY future, and to Maine's place in paving

the way toward making more sustainable food more widely available. Please vote “ought not pass” on LD 1211.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Emily Selinger