

May 3, 2021

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

I am writing to testify strongly against LD 1211. I am, frankly exhausted by LD1211 and bills like it (including LD 1146 which was heartily defeated a few weeks ago). These bills are aggressive, and poorly hidden, attempts by wealthy landowners to protect their own real estate interests on the coast. Oyster, mussel, seaweed, and scallop growers came out in force – many of whom are fishermen who have diversified into aquaculture - against LD1146 to show their commitment to supporting a resilient and diversified coast. The fact that we have to do it again today against a similar bill disguised by a different title is frustrating and sets coastal collaboration and progress back.

We are a state that values our working waterfronts and *the people* who work on the water. We are a state that cherishes our heritage of making a living with our hands on the water. This bill threatens to undercut exactly that which we value. If this bill passes we have, in essence, given power to the people who live here only seasonally and who value their view on the water more than the sustainable working future of Mainers.

As I – and many other aquaculturists and fishermen - have said in testimony in the past to this committee, the rules and regulations for coastal waters currently in place are fair and help protect our coast by allowing for complimentary uses. Aquaculture lease applications are rigorous and the process stringent. The Department of Marine Resources applies their rules with consistency and with a focus on ensuring that aquaculture does not compete or challenge other uses on the water. What the DMR doesn't consider, however, is how rich landowners feel about their view being changed by people making a living on the water. This bill has been crafted in an effort to change that and to make sure that these seasonal landowners can block hardworking Mainers from making a living.

I run a company, Atlantic Sea Farms, whose mission is laser-focused on providing diversified income opportunities for fishermen through kelp farming. We work with 24 farmers throughout the coast of Maine – most of whom are lobstermen. We provide them with free seed and guarantee purchase of every single blade of kelp that we grow. Our kelp removes carbon and nitrogen and helps mitigate ocean acidification locally. Our kelp helps fishermen diversify when they are otherwise almost completely dependent on a lobster monoculture. Instead of doing the important work of helping to amplify our positive impact along the coast today, I am testifying – again – to try to save this industry that is providing jobs and a hopeful future for coastal Mainers - including fishermen – across the coast. The fishermen with whom we work farmed more than 93% of all of the line-grown seaweed grown in Maine last year. In other words,

**fishermen are the kelp aquaculture industry in Maine** – and the two industries are not at odds with one another, as some lobbyists and interest groups would make you think. They are, in our case, one in the same.

We don't need another study that values riparian views over the jobs of Mainers. We need to support activities on the water that are good for Maine and keep our working waterfronts working instead of bills that make us take days off the water to testify and distract from the good news story that is sustainable Maine aquaculture.

I urge you strongly to vote “ought not to pass” and to support the Department of Marine Resources and Maine’s fishing and aquaculture industry by helping us thrive instead of continue to battle rich landowners preferences and whims.

Respectfully,

Briana Warner  
CEO  
Ocean Approved, Inc. (DBA Atlantic Sea Farms)