



# MAINE AQUACULTURE ASSOCIATION

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May 3, 2021

The Honorable David Miramant, Senate Chair  
The Honorable Jay McCreight, House Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources  
Cross Building, Room 206  
Augusta, ME. 04333

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

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to speak with you this morning. My name is Sebastian Belle and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Aquaculture Association (MAA). The MAA represents the states aquatic farmers and the many infrastructure companies that provide goods and services to our producers. In the year 2020 our members, many of who are your constituents, grew products worth over 100 million dollars at the farm gate and employed over 700 Maine citizens.

I stand before you today to testify in **strong opposition** to LD1211, “A Resolve, To Create the Study Group to Research Balancing Development and Conservation in Maine's Coastal Waters and Submerged Lands”. LD1211 is yet another attempt to attack the state’s working waterfronts. Anti- working waterfront interests are using the legislature to harass hard working small business people who are trying to make a living on the water. LD 1211 establishes a 25-member commission to review existing shoreland zone, coastal waters and submerged lands laws in Maine. There is NO representation for aquaculture and ONLY TOKEN representation for commercial fishing on the proposed commission. The makeup of the commission ensures that commercial working waterfront interests, including commercial fishing and aquaculture, will be in the minority and intentionally marginalized. **The establishment of regional management bodies that structurally discriminate against working waterfront interests will effectively allow wealthy coastal communities to establish “gated communities” where working waterfronts are not welcome.** Do you want to be the committee that helped that happen?

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LD 1211 will focus on the relative role of statewide authorities versus regional authorities that do not currently exist in Maine. LD 1211 will trigger the most sweeping review of existing marine resource laws in over 40 years. The establishment of regional management authorities will be a dramatic departure from current law and will add significant layers to any permitting or leasing procedure. That is in fact, exactly the intent of the Bill's proponents. LD 1211 is a back door way to take another try at pushing through legislation that you just voted unanimously Ought Not To Pass (LD1146). Proponents of LD 1146 are pushing hard for LD 1211 because it will give them another year to raise money, and use disinformation and scare tactics to set the stage for legislation the next session. They want another bite at the apple. Please don't give it to them.

LD 1211 has an "emergency preamble", requires the commission members be appointed within 30 days after the Bill's passage, requires the commission to submit its report by December 2021 and authorizes the commission to submit legislation. The speed of the proposal suggests that A. the consideration of a complicated series of laws will be fast tracked and shallow. B. The recommendations of the commission have been developed in draft form already and the commission is intended to "rubber stamp" what the Bills proponents have already developed.

Regionalization will decrease DMR's ability to ensure consistent and fair management of ALL the States waters and resources and place a tremendous strain on DMR staff time as they engage with multiple "bay management" groups. LD 1211 will force DMR to use staff and resources on yet another study commission to study how Maines Marine resources are managed. With respect to only the aquaculture sector Maine has conducted 23 studies over the last 35 years, 13 of which have focused on policy issues around aquaculture development and the leasing system. Maine Seagrant is currently conducting another statewide study that includes significant stakeholder input. The results of that study will be released later this summer. It is unlikely that another task force created under LD 1211 will develop any new policies or proposed regulations that have not already been thoroughly discussed in Maine. For example, LD1211 is very similar to a prior exercise under the Baldacci administration. The task force created at that time considered all the issues outlined in LD 1211 and concluded that the establishment of "Bay Management" authorities was not warranted and would in fact make it more difficult to effectively manage the states marine resources.

Many of the prior studies came out of opponents to a particular lease application wanting to either delay the application or change the leasing criteria to ensure the application was denied. LD 1211 is yet another example of this. State agency and the legislatures resources should be focused on the real challenges working waterfronts face such as lack of wild stock population surveys, Right whales, climate change, gentrification and offshore wind.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to once again thank the Department staff and the Commissioner for their hard work and efforts to ensure Maines working waterfronts and the resources they depend on are rigorously managed, able to continue producing some of the world's best seafood and build Maines Brand. I also want to thank the committee for your patience and willingness to listen closely to the men and women who rely on the aquaculture sector to help their families make a living and preserve Maines endangered working waterfronts. Please vote **Ought NOT to Pass** on LD 1211. Thank you for your attention. I would be glad to answer any questions you have.

Respectfully,



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