

Hello,

My name is Jeff Auger, I moved to Maine over 10 years ago to be part of our historic working waterfront tradition by farming oysters on the Damariscotta River. I am testifying to oppose LD 586, while the Bill claims to be “protecting Maine fisheries” I can attest it will only continue the trend of us losing our working waterfront.

Our aquaculture community has done great things for Maine in the last 10 years. Not only do the shellfish we grow clean and improve Maine’s waters (an adult oyster can filter up to 50 gallons of water a day), but we have attracted a young professional workforce which our state desperately needs. LD 586 would halt this progress: the bill has many issues and was clearly crafted as an attempt to halt projects which already have received permits and approval by State regulatory agencies. It usurps the authority and expertise of the DEP and mandates an agency unfamiliar with air quality or carbon emissions to propagate rules governing them.

The most concerning issue with LD 586 centers on its broad language. I have heard “industrial” be used to describe a 5, 50, or 500 acre farm. Similarly, “recirculating aquaculture” is applicable to many essential practices used throughout our community. The farm I currently work with, Muscongus Bay Aquaculture, operates one of three shellfish hatcheries in Maine. Our hatchery not only supports our farms in the Damariscotta River, but we send oysters and clams to over 100 farms up and down the East Coast. Hatcheries are the lifeblood of our industry: without oyster seed no farmer in Maine or on the East Coast can effectively grow shellfish or run a business. We need to ensure that Maine can have *more* hatcheries on our coast so that we can continue to provide seed for a growing industry and allow current operations to deal with changing water chemistry.

In addition to shellfish hatcheries LD 586 regulates state and federal hatcheries, seaweed hatcheries, and shellfish holding facilities. Holding facilities are going to become necessary as the aquaculture community deals with worsening weather conditions due to climate change. Why should we hold these benign facilities, which are already regulated and monitored, to the impossible standard of “zero impact”? No other commercial industry is held to this level or is required by law to be “carbon neutral”.

LD 586 mandates an impossible standard its drafters know no operation can achieve. It will prevent the growth of a sustainable industry by preventing new hatcheries and cutting off every farmer in Maine from being able to buy more seed.

-Jeff Auger