



MAINE & CO.

**131st MAINE LEGISLATURE
THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON MARINE RESOURCES**

Re: Testimony in Opposition to LD 586

Senator Reny, Representative Hepler, and distinguished members of the Committee on Marine Resources, my name is Peter DelGreco, President & CEO of Maine & Co. My organization exists to find growing companies and show them how they can be successful in establishing an operation in Maine. Created during the administration of Governor Angus King, we are a privately funded 501(c)6. We compete with states from the entire country and countries around the world to attract new jobs and investment to Maine. We also work with existing Maine companies, helping them implement their growth plans.

Thank you for the opportunity to share why I am opposed to LD 586.

LD 586 is a bill that singles out aquaculture and specifically land based aquaculture. It holds the industry to a unique standard that no other industry in the state is beholden. It is designed to be an unachievable standard in order to essentially eliminate an industry on the verge of adding significant value and job opportunities to the Maine economy.

At Maine & Co., we've been fortunate to work with pioneers in land based aquaculture for over a decade. RAS is not a new technology. It is a technology that has been in place for multiple decades across the world and even here in Maine. As a legislative body, the Maine legislature has supported the growth of this industry. The federal government has supported the growth of this industry. Institutions like the University of Maine and University of New England have supported the growth of this industry. Lobstering communities like Jonesport have voted overwhelmingly to support this industry. The lobster industry has supported the growth of this industry. In fact, the lobster industry generally prefers land-based aquaculture over the growth of net pen aquaculture. Governors King, Baldacci, LePage, and Mills have all supported the growth of this industry. In fact, Governor Mills' Ten Year Economic Development plan specifically calls for the growth of aquaculture in "Strategy C". The Maine climate plan – Maine Won't Wait – also discusses aquaculture's role in helping to mitigate the effects of climate change.

With all of this support going back decades, what has changed? New projects are arriving in Maine that have the opportunity to invest hundreds of millions of dollars and

employ hundreds of people along the Maine coast. This has angered wealthy second and third homeowners who like to visit Maine on a part-time basis. These people have funded aggressive opposition campaigns, threatening to harass new companies and create conspiracy theories about companies who hope to locate in Maine. Now they are trying to use this political body to accomplish what they could not achieve with their tactics and various appeals

I encourage every member of this committee to look at the regulatory process that these projects undertook. It was a gauntlet. Our DEP and DMR regulators were vigorous. The Federal EPA was painstaking in their review. And the local town councils and planning boards were exhaustive in their reviews, despite the well-funded opposition attacks.

At Maine & Co., we are not scientists and don't try to pretend that we are. We tell companies that we have a clean environment with strict regulations and enforce those regulations aggressively. If a company is willing to honor those rules and values, they are welcome to join our business community and invest in our economy. If companies do not want to adhere to those regulations, they will not be welcome to join our economy. LD 586 is an attempt to usurp the authority of the agencies responsible for enforcing those rules while introducing an unrealistic and scientifically unsupported standard.

Well-funded consultants and wealthy landowners are pushing this bill because they have not been able to demonstrate to regulators that these land-based aquaculture projects are harmful. Rather, they are an inconvenience to people who have no vested interest in economic development in Maine. They have made their fortunes and are trying to hide behind a veil of environmentalism. What they are doing, in actuality, is harming the environment by blocking new technologies that may inconvenience them on a visit.

These new technologies in food production are vital to Maine's economic growth, our climate and national security issues. In fact, the Department of Homeland Security has identified food security as a top critical infrastructure sector as we exit the pandemic. Homeland Security has explicitly stated: "The U.S. government needs to promote domestic aquaculture for food production." Homeland Security has rightly identified that the country imports 90% of its seafood. Building seafood production here in Maine under strict scrutiny of regulators not only helps Maine's economy, but also addresses a critical national security vulnerability: our nation's food chain.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to express my concerns with LD 586. I will gladly be available to respond to any follow up thoughts, questions, or concerns.

Peter DelGreco
Maine & Co.
LD 586

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My testimony is attached.

Best,
Peter