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LD 2065

I would like to state my objections to passing LD 2065, "An Act to Amend Maine's Aquaculture Leasing Laws" as currently written. My chief concerns are as follows:

- The bill raises the number of concerned citizens necessary to request a public hearing from 5 to 25. It is not clear why the Marine Resources Committee wishes to decrease transparency by establishing new and more stringent limits on public participation.
- Any lack of transparency in public processes becomes a potential problem for those affected by a proposed action. Given the number of seasonal occupants of potentially affected property, and the uncertain timing of notifications to property owners within 1,000 feet of a proposed lease, this may essentially result in disenfranchisement of those affected.
- The bill requires a single public notice and does not stipulate exactly where that notice must be published. In fact, it appears to be intentionally vague on that subject to the point of potentially preventing the public at large from understanding what is being proposed.
- Any comment period should date from the time at which notice is published and, in the case of affected property owners within 1,000 feet of the proposed lease, is actually received by all of those owners, not the date on which it was issued. This almost certainly would become an issue for seasonal owners.
- There is no justification provided for converting an LPA to a 20-year lease without a public hearing unless 25 citizens call for a hearing. The same transparency and inhibition of public participation issues apply here as those noted above.