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# MAINE

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## Lobstermen's Association, Inc.

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### **Neither For Nor Against**

### **LD 968 Resolve, to Study Stakeholder Input Involving the Appointment of the Commissioner of Marine Resources**

March 27, 2025

**Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler, and members of the Marine Resources Committee,**

My name is Patrice McCarron, and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Lobstermen's Association (MLA), which has proudly advocated for the best interests of Maine's lobstermen for 71 years. I am presenting MLA's testimony Neither For Nor Against LD 968 because the MLA is unclear about what the bill seeks to accomplish.

The MLA supports the sentiment of LD 968, which appears to be to ensure that stakeholders from Maine's commercial fisheries can provide input on potential candidates to serve as the Commissioner of Maine's Department of Marine Resources (DMR). In recent years, Maine's lobster fishery has, and continues to, face unprecedented challenges. There is no doubt that the DMR Commissioner bears tremendous responsibility for the future of the industry.

Maine's commercial fisheries are the lifeblood of our coastal communities and an integral part of our heritage. It is essential that whoever serves as the DMR Commissioner, and all of Maine's political leaders, understand the industry's importance.

Unlike most coastal states, however, Maine's Marine Resources Commissioner is part of the Governor's Cabinet. This ensures that the fishing industry's concerns are regularly briefed to the Governor and prioritized. In other states, marine resource agencies are often buried within larger bureaucracies, making it harder for commercial fishing issues to get the attention they deserve.

Maine already has a process in place for stakeholder input. Past transition teams, from the Mills, LePage, Baldacci and King Administrations, have sought input from the MLA, and other fishing industry leaders, on potential candidates to serve as DMR Commissioner. The MLA has also testified on nominees at public hearings before the Marine Resources Committee, which is

responsible for reviewing the Governor's appointee before that person is confirmed by the Legislature.

Given the social, cultural and economic importance of Maine's commercial fisheries to the state of Maine, the MLA believes it is critical that the DMR Commissioner remain a cabinet-level position. The MLA supports expanding industry input, but we cannot support any proposal that would undermine the Commissioner's place in the Governor's Cabinet.

Thank you for your time and consideration.