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Muscongus Bay Aquaculture
LD 1722

I am Nellie Brylewski, General Manager of Muscongus Bay Aquaculture and Dodge Cove Marine Farm. I support bill LD 1722 - An Act to Simplify the Regulation of Aquaculture Leases.

LD 1722 looks to;

- simplify the process of converting a limited purpose lease (LPA), with no changes in area occupied or operations conducted, to a standard lease.
- have standard lease renewals approved in a timelier manner, once a complete application has been received.

The current process for both is lengthy and requires significant DMR staff time.

If no changes to the operation are proposed and there has been no cause for revocation of the lease, this process should be simple and quick. This bill should reduce the administrative workload on the Department while protecting the public trust and environment.

LD 1722 does not change the commissioner's authority to revoke a lease at any time, for cause.

Over the last two years DMR and MAA have conducted a series of listening sessions with both aquaculturists and other stakeholders. In both series aquaculturists clearly indicated that the backlog of lease applications was one of the most serious challenges to the sector.

Treating lease renewals as a full adjudicatory process, for an existing lease that in some cases has been operating for years and for which the department has found no cause to revoke, significantly adds to the administrative workload of the department. DMR has repeatedly indicated that the reason for the lease backlog was lack of adequate staff and a burdensome administrative workload. The industry has repeatedly suggested process improvements and supported the department's budget requests in front of the administration and the legislature's appropriations committee. The department now has more aquaculture staff than it ever has in its history. LD 1722 seeks to help solve some of the administrative and staffing challenges the department itself has identified.