

Jeff Putnam
CHEBEAGUE ISLAND
LD 2002

Testimony in Support of LD 2002
To: The Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources
Date: February 3, 2026

Good morning distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources. My name is Jeff Putnam, I am a lobsterman from Chebeague Island and I am writing to voice my strong support for L.D. 2002 and the proposal to extend the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative (MLMC) through 2031.

I believe the Collaborative is an essential institution for the future of Maine's most iconic industry. At the recent US/CA lobster town meeting we learned that farm-raised spiny lobsters from Vietnam, the Caribbean, and other regions continue to expand their presence in the global marketplace, we face a growing challenge in maintaining the distinct identity and premium positioning of wild-caught Maine lobster. These farmed products are fundamentally different from our cold-water, sustainably harvested American lobster, yet the potential for confusion and even deliberate mislabeling in international markets is real. The MLMC serves as our industry's unified voice, working tirelessly to differentiate our high-quality Maine lobster from other products in the marketplace.

It is tempting to look at short-term price fluctuations, like the lower prices we experienced last fall, and question the value of a long-term marketing effort. However, I believe that would be a profoundly shortsighted decision. The core mission of the Collaborative is to build and sustain demand by placing our superior, sustainable lobster in high-value locations and markets. This is not a short-term fix; it is a long-term strategy to insulate our industry from the volatility of commodity markets. To abandon this crucial work now would be to undo years of progress and leave our fishery vulnerable.

Furthermore, the Collaborative is entering a period of renewal. With several new members poised to join the board, we have a significant opportunity to build upon the foundation that has been laid over the past decade. These new leaders need time to learn from past successes, develop innovative strategies, and implement a plan that is nimble and responsive to our dynamic market. Extending the MLMC to 2031 provides the stability necessary for this next generation of leadership to succeed. It ensures continuity while fostering the evolution of our marketing strategy.

In conclusion, the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative is a critical investment in the long-term health and prosperity of our state's lobster industry. It protects our brand, promotes our commitment to sustainability, and provides the strategic foresight needed to navigate an uncertain future. I urge you to vote in favor of L.D. 2002 and grant the Collaborative the time it needs to continue its vital work. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely
-Jeff Putnam