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Testimony of Representative Grayson Lookner presenting
LD 115, An Act to Assess Impact Fees on Megayachts
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

Good morning, Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and esteemed colleagues on the Committee on Transportation. My name is Grayson Lookner, and I represent House District 113, which includes several neighborhoods in Portland. I'm here today to testify in support of **LD 115, An Act to Assess Impact Fees on Megayachts**.

When I introduced a very similar bill last session to the one that is being presented today, I didn't realize how much more timely it would become in two short years. In that period, we've seen successive storms driven by climate change wreak havoc on our coastal communities, costing our state tens-of-millions in damages to repair.

We've also seen how those same communities are starved of revenue to provide vital public services, like harbor infrastructure and transportation, forcing them to increase property taxes on middle-income homeowners. LD 115 aims to alleviate both of these issues by assessing an impact fee on the heaviest users of our coastal infrastructure and the biggest contributors to climate change – megayachts over 150 feet in length.

This legislation is about fairness, sustainability, and ensuring that the wealth flowing into Maine's most affluent coastal communities benefits the entire state—including our rural and inland regions.

Maine's coast is one of our greatest treasures. People come from around the world to experience "the way life should be" – our pristine harbors, working waterfronts, and idyllic summers. And just as tourists staying in hotels pay a lodging tax, it is only right that those visiting in megayachts—floating palaces that can cost hundreds of millions of dollars—contribute their fair share.

But this bill is about more than just equity—it's about survival. The Gulf of Maine is warming faster than nearly any other body of water on the planet, and climate-driven storms are destroying our coastal infrastructure faster than we can rebuild. Flooding is increasing, working waterfronts are at risk, and by mid-century, we could see another foot and a half of sea level rise. The damage is already here—docks are being smashed by pounding waves, roads are washing out, and historic communities are facing existential threats.

Meanwhile, the owners of these megayachts—many of whom register their vessels in offshore tax havens like the Cayman Islands or Liechtenstein, a country with no coastline—are dodging their responsibility to contribute to the common good. These yachts burn hundreds of thousands of dollars in fuel in a single season, emitting as much carbon as hundreds of average Americans. Their excessive consumption is accelerating the crisis that is eroding our shores.

This bill ensures that those who place the heaviest burden on our harbors help fund their resilience. Half of the revenue will go toward critical harbor infrastructure, dredging, and sea-level rise mitigation. The other half will support public transportation, like our island ferries, which have seen drastic price hikes—pricing out working Mainers.

Some claim this fee will drive these yachts away. But let's be clear: this is a modest ask. The reality is, people will always come for Maine's unmatched beauty—just as they do despite our hotel taxes. This way, we can ensure that the unimaginable wealth that visits our already affluent communities every summer can benefit the entire state.

We have a choice: Will we let the wealthiest exploit our coast without contributing, while our working waterfronts crumble? Or will we ensure that their presence benefits all of Maine—funding the infrastructure and climate resilience our state desperately needs?

This bill is a step toward a more sustainable, equitable future. I urge you to support it.

Thank you. I'd be happy to answer any questions.