



ISLESBORO AMBULANCE ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 277
Islesboro, ME 04848

To: The Honorable Tim Nangle, Senator and the Honorable Lydia Crafts, Representative Co-Chairs and Members of the Transportation Committee.

April 29, 2025

Re: LD 947 An Act to Clarify Overnight Docking at Mainland Ports for Certain Island Ferry Vessels and LD 1231. An Act Requiring Ferries to Dock Overnight on Certain Islands for Emergency Purposes

I'm here on behalf of the Islesboro Ambulance Association, which is a non-profit 501(c)(3) whose mission is to support Islesboro's Emergency Services through public fund raising. Those funds are spent to pay for EMS training and ambulance equipment. I am the Vice President of IAA. This testimony was prepared with Doug Welldon, the President of IAA and approved by our board. We are writing in support of LD 947 and LD 1231. We realize you have several bills related to ferry service on Maine's unbridged islands. Our hope is that whatever form the final legislation takes, it includes continued overnight berthing of the Islesboro ferry on the island.

Berthing the ferry on unbridged island is a life or death decision for island residents—see this article in Working Waterfront, for example <https://www.islandinstitute.org/working-waterfront/imagine-island-ems-at-night-without-the-ferry/>). When there is no overnight ferry, transporting patients is dangerous for both the patient and for the EMS crew. Our organization's president, Doug, and his wife have personal experience of safe transport by ambulance to the mainland hospital during a medical emergency, as have many other on our island. They were comforted by the care of well qualified EMTs, using the latest medical equipment available throughout the entire ambulance transport via the ferry, which was there when they needed it.

If you would like to see how dangerous it can be to transport a critically ill patient on a lobster boat, I refer you to the YouTube video put together by Northport EMS. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23x6kWv7Pvg>

The Islesboro Ambulance Association Board of Directors supports this legislation for the following reasons:

- Islesboro ferries have been berthed on the island since 1936 for the purpose of permitting after hours emergency ambulance runs to mainland hospitals.
- We note there have been no changes to this successful policy until a recent proposal, with various issues being cited by the MeDOT Commissioner.
- We believe whatever issues there are can be mitigated through focusing on the issues, and doing the work to solve the problem. It is NOT necessary to change the 89-year precedent that has worked and can STILL work by berthing our ferry on Islesboro, allowing for emergency runs, no matter what the hour.

- The Ambulance Association is dismayed at the prospect of seeing our well-equipped ambulances sitting on the island dock at 2 AM, while a critically ill patient is transferred down an incredibly steep ramp at low tide in the middle of a howling storm, with a dangerous transfer to a pitching lobster boat. The process in reverse would be repeated upon arrival on the mainland. This is not safe; it is not right.
- There is no substitute for full, complete transportation to the hospital across Penobscot Bay in a safe ambulance aboard the ferry.
- The Maine State Ferry Service is just that: a SERVICE to our islanders. We only ask that decisions be made with the idea of service FIRST, and then work back from the service starting point to find solutions for issues. Don't reverse the process, forsaking service, and endangering patients.

The Islesboro Ambulance Association supports LD 947 and LD 1231 and asks that you vote "ought to pass."

Thank you.

Doug Welldon
President

Janis Petzel
Vice President

On behalf of the Islesboro Ambulance Association



