



Testimony to the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations & Financial Affairs

in support of

LD 983, An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Promote Land Conservation, Working Waterfronts, Water Access and Outdoor Recreation

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Hugh Cowperthwaite, Director, Fisheries & Aquaculture Program
CEI, Brunswick, Maine
HughCowperthwaite@ceimaine.org

Dear Senator Breen, Representative Pierce, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

My name is Hugh Cowperthwaite, and I am the Director of the Fisheries & Aquaculture Program at Coastal Enterprises, Incorporated (CEI). I reside in Falmouth. I am testifying today on behalf of CEI, to express CEI's strong support for LD 983: specifically, the Land for Maine's Future Program.

Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI) is a private, nonprofit Community Development Corporation (CDC) and Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) based in Brunswick. CEI was founded in 1977 to develop job-creating small business ventures in natural-resource industries in Maine's rural and coastal regions. CEI integrates financing, industry expertise, and policy solutions to help grow good jobs, environmentally sustainable enterprises, and shared prosperity in Maine and other rural regions.

CEI has a 43-year track record of supporting Maine's commercial fishing and aquaculture businesses. We do this by providing business services including free business counseling and technical assistance, and by making loans and investments in those marine businesses wishing to start or expand. Since the 1970s, our total portfolio of loans to this sector has grown to over \$18 million and these loans have sustained or created over 2,200 jobs in Maine.

For 9 years, CEI helped the Department of Marine Resources and the Land for Maine's Future Program administer the Working Waterfront Access Protection Program. Key to the state's 10-year Economic Development plan to preserve Maine's marine resources and grow and innovate the state's heritage based economic pursuits like fishing, farming, and forestry, this program conserves unique working waterfront properties to assure their availability for future generations of fishermen and sea farmers to access their boats and harvest areas.

To date, 30 properties have been protected but there is pent up demand for this important program. The cumulative impacts of the program are impressive in terms of land area, coastline, boats, and fishing families supported by the fishing industry.

On behalf of CEI, I urge you to pass LD 983, and let voters decide whether to allocate funding for the Land for Maine's Future Program. Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.