

March 8, 2017

Good morning Senator Saviello, Representative Tucker, and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee: my name is Melissa Gates, and I am the Northeast Regional Manager and a lobbyist for the Surfrider Foundation, whose New England Regional office is located in my town of residence, Cushing.

Today I am representing the Surfrider Foundation Maine Chapter and our thousands of members and supporters across the state in offering strong support for LD450, an act to prevent oil spills in the Casco Bay.

The Surfrider Foundation is a nonprofit environmental organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's ocean, waves and beaches through conservation, activism, research and education. Our Maine Chapter volunteers are active across several coastal issue areas, including protecting public beach access, mitigating plastic marine debris, advancing smart coastal preservation and adaptation strategies, and advocating for improved water quality.

Protecting the Casco Bay from oil spills is critically important. Once an oil spill occurs, the damage is done. Environmental fallout caused by an oil spill can last for decades after the spill occurs, killing fish, birds, marine mammals, and plants, and significantly degrading the health of the ecosystem. When an oil slick reaches the beach, it coats and clings to every grain of sand. If it reaches marshes or wetland areas, plants and grasses absorb the oil, damaging the plants and rendering the entire area unsuitable as wildlife habitat.

The best prevention of an oil spill in the Casco Bay is to ensure stringent regulations and laws are in place to prevent oil spills. LD450 provides an avenue for Maine to enact such a law, helping safeguard the Casco Bay from the eminent threat posed by open water bunkering.

Bunkering is risky business. According to the International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation, in the 41 years between 1974 and 2015 ship-to-ship "bunkering" fuel transfers resulted in 607 spills, ranging in size from 2,225 gallons to more than 220,000 gallons. This preventable devastation to the marine environment is totally unacceptable.

With unprotected open water bunkering, it's not a matter of IF we will see an oil spill in the Casco Bay, but when. We cannot allow the convenience of this dangerous practice



to continue to be prioritized over adequately protecting the Casco Bay from the threat of an oil spill.

By requiring boom use for open water bunkering, LD450 would help prevent adding the Casco Bay to the list of watershed tragedies caused by the irresponsible practice of open water bunkering.

Booms are floating, physical barriers to oil, made of plastic, metal, or other materials, which can be deployed as a proactive measure to slow the spread of oil in the event of a spill and help keep it contained until emergency response can be employed. Requiring booms for open water bunkering is a proactive way to help protect the Casco Bay from the very serious threat of oil spills.

An oil spill in the Casco Bay would mean devastation for the marine environment and our coastal residents, as well as critical sectors of our economy, including tourism and recreation, which is the single largest contributing sector to Maine's ocean economy. It would be irresponsible to allow this risky practice conducted by private enterprise to jeopardize our public resource in this significant way; passing LD450 would begin to steer the ship right toward mitigating the threat of spills in the Casco Bay.

The Surfrider Foundation extends thanks to bill sponsor Senator Chipman, and his multiple co-sponsors, including Senator Saviello, for bringing forth this important bill in an effort to help prevent oil spills in the Casco Bay.

Thank you for your consideration of an Ought To Pass vote.

Sincerely,

Melissa Gates
Northeast Regional Manager
Surfrider Foundation

