



February 27, 2019

Good afternoon Senator Carson, Representative Tucker, and distinguished 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, operating our New England Regional office in my town of residence, Cushing.

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 beach goers, surfers, kayakers and the like who are active across several coastal issue areas, including protecting public beach access, mitigating plastic marine debris, advocating for improved water quality, and advancing smart coastal preservation and adaptation strategies.

Today I am representing the Surfrider Foundation Maine Chapter and our thousands of members and supporters across the state in offering support for LD565, An Act To Establish the Maine Coastal Risks and Hazards Commission.

The formation of a coastal commission is a smart, forward-thinking approach to utilizing the best available science and a broad spectrum of affected stakeholders in tandem with legislators to advance understanding and prepare for coastal risks and hazards.

Indeed, we can learn from the mistakes of other states that have been struck by coastal disaster without being properly prepared, and we know that this potential for disaster would not merely affect our coastal areas but all corners of our State, as all taxpayers absorb the high cost of federal disaster relief. We know that we'd save a lot of money and best protect our coastal economy, resources and communities if we planned ahead, which is what LD565 aims to do.

New Hampshire's state legislature formed a Coastal Risks and Hazards Commission in 2013 to help coastal communities and the State prepare for projected sea level rise and other coastal and coastal watershed hazards.

LD565 has been crafted under the same successful vision that was executed in New Hampshire; a vision that manifested in an invaluable summary and recommendation product<sup>1</sup> released for public comment in March of 2016 that articulates issues, risks and vulnerabilities, next steps and goals of the state as informed by 37 New Hampshire

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<sup>1</sup> Download the full NH report: [j.mp/1ROeuuE](http://j.mp/1ROeuuE)





commissioners representing a wide swath of ocean and coastal interests. The final report and legislative recommendations have significantly increased the knowledge base of coastal risks and hazards in New Hampshire while concurrently generating buy-in on proposed recommendations across multiple sectors represented on the Commission, and outlining next steps and goals based upon the best available science in coordination with community and marine trade needs. Legislative recommendations have passed in NH while more are working their way through their legislature, and there are grant projects underway in New Hampshire focused on implementing the Commission's recommendations with municipalities. The fruits of the Commission's labor are paying off, and the State of New Hampshire is more resilient for it.

This working model from New Hampshire provided an excellent product that is now being used to help that State prepare for coastal hazards and risks. The Surfrider Foundation urges this Committee to recognize the immense value in replicating the New Hampshire effort here in Maine, and tailoring it to meet our State's specific needs.

In 2014, Maine's direct ocean economy:

- Generated \$2.3 billion (or 4.2%) of the state's GDP.
- Provided \$1.5 billion in wages and salaries.
- Provided 46,319 jobs.<sup>2</sup>

Over 65% of the State's ocean economy jobs were in coastal tourism & recreation, which is our State's single largest contributing sector at nearly 53% of our State's ocean GDP, and according to the World Travel and Tourism Council's recent report, travel and tourism is on the rise.<sup>3</sup>

Because going to the beach, swimming, surfing, kayaking and other forms of ocean and coastal recreation are pivotal to Maine's ocean economy, are widely practiced, and are key elements of our State's socioeconomic fabric, as evidenced in a 2015 ocean and coastal marine recreation characterization study the Surfrider Foundation led in collaboration with the Northeast Regional Planning Body,<sup>4</sup> Surfrider urges a clarification to §2L(2) to clarify that the seat for a "A representative of an organization that

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<sup>2</sup> Available online at: National Ocean Economics Program, <http://www.oceaneconomics.org>

<sup>3</sup> Available online at: World Travel & Tourism Council, [goo.gl/gYbqKo](http://goo.gl/gYbqKo)

<sup>4</sup> Available online at: The Surfrider Foundation, [goo.gl/5xkdo3](http://goo.gl/5xkdo3)





represents the interests of the tourism or recreational industry in the State” be clarified to characterize ***non-consumptive recreation*** interests, allowing the additional subsections for membership that specify fishing interests to represent consumptive and commercial recreation. **It is vitally important for the leading economic driver of Maine’s ocean economy to have a seat at the table.**

Because the health of coastal and ocean ecosystems is paramount to properly assessing coastal risks and hazards, the Surfrider Foundation is appreciative that the seat articulated in §2L(3) calling for a representative of a “statewide organization that promotes professional environmental management practices to protect and improve the waters and related environments in the State” be included, to help represent the interests of a healthy ocean and coastal ecosystem.

The Surfrider Foundation extends thanks to Representative Blume, and her multiple co-sponsors, for bringing forth this important bill in an effort to help Maine best prepare for changes involving our coast – a resource that impacts all Mainers, and not just coastal residents.

Thank you for your consideration of our clarifying request and an Ought To Pass vote.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Melissa Gates".

Melissa Gates  
Northeast Regional Manager  
Surfrider Foundation

