

The Honorable Chellie Pingree

**U.S. House of Representatives
1st District of Maine**

**Testimony on H.R. 1766 Keep America's Waterfront Working Act
Before the House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee**

November 2, 2017

Thank you, Chairman Lamborn and Ranking Member Huffman, for allowing me to testify today about the Keep America's Waterfronts Working Act and the issue of working waterfronts generally. This is an important issue that I have been working on since coming to Congress. And I am eager to talk about it, and call attention to it whenever I can.

This Subcommittee knows well the importance of supporting our coastal communities. You hear on a regular basis, from constituents from across the country who make their living on the water. Whether they are boatbuilders from the West Coast, or recreational fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico, or commercial fishermen in the Gulf of Maine, the refrain is the same...that our water dependent businesses along our coasts need help in preserving and protecting vital waterfront access.

I have a short one minute video that is actually produced by the Island Institute in my state, and that you will hear from in a later panel, to explain a little bit more about what a Working Waterfront is and what it means in Maine.

Could the clerk please start the video, and I thank the Chair and the staff for their indulgence in allowing it.

VIDEO PLAYS

So, as you can see, the men and women who work on the waterfront want to STAY there...these are their communities and their work.

Unfortunately, waterfront access is quickly disappearing under pressure from incompatible development. Our fishermen already have concerns about changes in the Oceans, storm surge OR migration patterns in fish, OR changes in their lobstertraps..things they have never seen before in their traps. But when you add to these issues, the loss of access, it truly puts our communities, and their economies at risk.

According to the National Working Waterfront Network, in 2009 when they compiled their statistics on the footprint of Working Waterfronts they found that these communities support over 3.4 percent of the country's total GDP. They also found that they support almost 5% of total US employment.

For Maine specifically, we rely on our hardworking fishermen and lobstermen. Our commercial fishery is part of our core. In 2016, Maine's fishing industry topped \$700 million in overall value, including a dockside value for the lobster fishery of \$533 million.

Boatbuilding is one of the state's oldest industries, and we have nearly 80 boat builders employing nearly 1400 workers, with wages totaling about \$59 million.

Maine's aquaculture sector has a direct economic impact of \$73.4 million in output, and over 550 jobs. This is an industry that has tripled in the past 10 years.

To support these industries, we need to do more. At the State level in Maine we have a Maine Working Waterfront Access Protection Program, and although this program is wonderful, it's not enough.

For example, there are 22 working waterfront projects in Maine funded by the program and there are new applications coming due to the demand.

The Federal government should be supporting this work with the same dedication that we have at the state level in some states...not duplicating efforts but maximizing dollars, bringing in more resources and making sure that the goals and plans that communities create can be brought to life.

The grant program created by this bill is voluntary and it allows states to decide if they want to participate in it. The working waterfront plans allow each state, rather than Congress or the Federal government to say what kinds of working waterfronts are most important to that state.

The federal government should support states in these efforts and encourage states to consider the importance of supporting working waterfront infrastructure while recognizing that each state has different needs.

Seeing these needs, I have worked with my colleagues in the past Congresses and have been proud to work with Congressman Wittman of Virginia, to raise this issue and make sure that we call attention to Working Waterfronts with some concrete steps.

The bipartisan bill before us today would establish a working waterfront grants program and, it would create a working waterfronts task force that would identify crucial needs and bring various federal agencies to the table on this issue.

I know that NOAA already does great work in this area and also that they have the authority under the CZMA to address this effort . What our bill would do, is make sure we dedicate resources for this specific work.

Beyond this bill, there is more to be done and I have been working on another piece of legislation that is still in discussion draft stages to address if we can additionally support coastal communities through changes to the Magnuson Stevens Act.

We need to look at various ways to help coastal areas and that is why I am so grateful for this hearing today. I would welcome an opportunity for the subcommittee to move the bill if possible.

In closing, I would like to read a quote from one of my constituents about the need for this work.

This statement is from a fisherman from Friendship Maine, a community of about 1100.

“As a lobsterman working on the regional ocean planning process, I've always said that fishermen need two basic things; a healthy stock to fish on, and the ability to access that resource. That access begins in the harbor at the shoreline. Without places to work on, store, load and unload, their catch, gear and boats, fishing, as we know it in Maine, will cease to exist.”

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to the next panel.