

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND FISHERIES
AND WILDLIFE**

In Support of L.D. 1548

**“An Act to Prevent the Introduction or Transfer of Invasive Fish Species in Inland
Waters of the State”**

Presented by Senator BLACK of Franklin. Cosponsored by Representatives: MASON of Lisbon,
THORNE of Carmel, WOOD of Greene.

DATE OF HEARING: April 14, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Dan Scott, Colonel of the Maine Warden Service, at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW), speaking on behalf of the Department in support of L.D. 1548.

This bill increases the suspension and revocation of a fishing license from 5 years to 10 years for the following 3 offenses: failing to acquire a permit to import live freshwater fish or eggs except for live baitfish or smelts, to stock inland waters and to import live fish taken within the State. It also reduces the mandatory suspension of a fishing license for the violation of illegal possession of live fish from 5 years to one year.

We noted that the bill summary explains that part of the bill which reduces the mandatory suspension of a fishing license for the violation of illegal possession of live fish from 5 years to one year. It accomplishes this by removing mention of section 12611 (the prohibition of illegal possession of live fish) from the list of mandatory 10-year license revocations within section 10902. However, the bill should make reference to this section within the list of mandatory 1-year fishing license revocations located in section 10902 paragraph 8. This could be accomplished by adding the following: **“G. Illegal possession of live fish, in violation of section 12611”**.

Often the Department is constrained by lack of funding to combat new introductions of invasive species. This bill would provide funding to mitigate or eradicate new introductions through mandatory restitution for failing to get a permit to stock inland waters or introduce fish or fish eggs into a private pond. Offenders must pay an amount equal to the cost of labor, equipment, chemicals and all other related expenses directly associated with mitigating or reclaiming waters affected as a result of a violation.

Current law requires a permit to transport live fish for breeding and advertising. This bill eliminates the specific activities of breeding and advertising, so the permit is required more generally for transport of live fish except for live baitfish and smelts taken within the State.

The bill creates a prohibition for disposal of live baitfish or smelts into inland waters and provides protection of inland waters from illegal species introductions through disposing of angler's baitfish and smelts.

In summary, the illegal introduction of any fish, including baitfish and smelts into a water body, can cause catastrophic and costly if not irreversible damage to native fisheries. Maine's fisheries are unique and draw anglers from all over the country, contributing over 360 million dollars to Maine's economy every year. This bill further protects these resources by creating an extra layer of protection through a series of fines or loss of license.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.