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PRESS RELEASE

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Sen. Anne Gobi, Senate Pass Bill to Expand Lobster Sales

Boston- The State Senate today adopted a bill which updates Massachusetts' lobster laws to permit the processing, sale, and transportation of cooked and frozen in-shell lobster parts.

Sen. Anne M. Gobi (D- Spencer), as co-chair of the Joint Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture, worked with her colleagues, including Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr (R- Gloucester), to advance the bill to the Senate floor, where it passed unanimously. The bill, supported by the Massachusetts lobster industry, is expected to cause an expansion of lobster processed in state and a reduction in lobster diversions to Canadian processors.

"I was glad to work with Senator Tarr to move this bill from committee," Said Gobi. "It will replace an antiquated law and provide an economic boost to our fisheries and will create more local jobs in processing."

Sen. Tarr sponsored the measure to end prohibitions on in-state sales and processing of lobster parts to accommodate the growing interest of consumers.

"This bill will allow more American lobsters currently being harvested and purchased here and subsequently processed in Canada, to be prepared for market in Massachusetts," said Tarr. "The net effect of modernizing the law will bolster local economic activity for lobstermen, processors, and local restaurants and food stores."

The lobster industry is a critical part of the Commonwealth's economy and heritage with more than 900 licensed lobstermen. A similar law in Maine has boosted Maine's economy, produced local outlets for product sales, and created jobs in the state.

While the sale of live, cooked, and canned lobster is legal in the state, the legislation expands the industry market with the inclusion of other lobster products. The Senate bill allows Department of Public Health licensed wholesale dealers to process unfrozen lobsters, authorizes the importation of unfrozen shell-on lobster parts and tails, and it allows for the retail of previously frozen raw in-shell tails.

The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries will be responsible for maintaining essential regulations including enforcing minimum lobster shell size standards and processing standards. The lobster fishery adheres to stringent state regulations including trap limits and the release of live juveniles.

The bill now goes before the House of Representatives for consideration.

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