

Testimony in Support of LD 1586 An Act to Promote Major Food Processing and Manufacturing Facility Expansion and to Create Jobs in Maine.

Submitted to the Joint Standing Committee of Taxation – May 2, 2019

Senator Chipman, Representative Tipping, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation.

My name is Donna Turner and I am here in support of LD1586.

I am the Town Manager for Washburn and I would like to give a little insight on what this processing facility would mean to our town.

The Town of Washburn has a population of just under 1700. There was a time many years ago that we had 2 processing plants and we were a booming little town. Today we have none of that. For the past 30 years we have slowly lost population, businesses have closed, families have moved, and the quality of living has deteriorated greatly. All we currently have is our farmers, a couple of businesses and our citizens to cover our tax base. Washburn currently has one of the highest, if not THE highest mil rate in the State of Maine. Keeping our town running and maintaining all of our departments gets harder each year. In fact, in the past couple of years we have come very close to losing our High School.

I know in today's world, consolidation seems to be the way to go but being as rural as we are, we currently have some children that ride the bus for an hour just to get to school in the morning. If we close our school, we would be adding an additional 30 minutes to their already lengthy bus ride. That would mean a minimum of three hours of their days would be spent on a bus just get to and from school. This is unacceptable. For our children's sake we have to find a way to keep our schools open. Additionally, if we are trying to encourage or entice families to move into our town, we HAVE to have our schools available for their children.

We also have a lot of elderly people in our community as well. No one on a fixed income can afford to have yearly tax increases just to keep the town afloat – or barely running. Also, it is only a matter of time before we end up losing an entire department. As people become more impoverished and taxes continue to increase, maintaining departments like the Rec, the Police or our Schools is becoming more and more difficult each year.

I know you are all probably thinking that this scenario is no different than a lot of small towns all across our State. But there is one difference....THEY CHOSE US!!! The McCrum Family has chosen the town of Washburn for the expansion of their company even though there are several other places they could go in other states that would offer so much more money, but they didn't. We are possibly inches away from having something none of us ever could have imagined in our town. This is something that will drastically change our town, as well as the surrounding towns for decades to come, if only this funding could be approved.

So, basically what I am asking here today is your support for this bill to help the McCrum Family expand in the Town of Washburn. I am in hopes that you can see what I can see. I can see growth by offering new jobs and giving families incentive to move into town; families with children for our schools, families who will build new homes, shop at our grocery stores and buy gas at our local gas station. Also this brings the potential for more growth as other businesses would see the appeal of operating in our town. It would mean farmers would thrive and when farmers thrive, our entire County will thrive. This could mean a complete 180° turn for not only our town but for all of Aroostook County. But as for Washburn, it will save our Police Dept, the Rec. Dept., ease the tax burden especially on our elderly population, and most importantly, allow us to keep our schools.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

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