



MOFGA Testimony In Support Of  
LD 1823 - *An Act to Respect and Protect the Right to Food*  
May 10, 2023

Good morning Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry My name is Heather Spalding and I am deputy director of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) MOFGA is working to build a food system that is healthy and fair for all of us MOFGA supports LD 1823 – *An Act to Respect and Protect the Right to Food*

MOFGA thanks Senator Craig Hickman for his leadership in securing the Right to Food for all Maine Citizens, and for bringing this additional legislation forward MOFGA worked with Senator Hickman and a broad coalition of citizen groups to establish the Right to Food – the first amendment of its kind enshrined in a state constitution The Right to Food gives Maine citizens standing to grow, raise, harvest and produce food, as long as they don't commit trespassing, theft, poaching, or abuses to private land, public land, or natural resources

The Right to Food Amendment shows that Maine recognizes food as a basic human need and that all future policy decisions about our food supply should build on this value statement MOFGA sees this constitutional amendment as an essential cornerstone in the foundation of a healthy and fair food system for all – one that generates the vast majority of Maine's food supply with locally, organically grown produce

Maine is almost entirely reliant on food from away – currently importing more than 90% of its food supply – though we have the natural resources including landbase, soils, water, flora, fauna, climate and knowledge to be self-sufficient and enjoy a healthy, diverse, balanced and delicious diet

This bill shines a light on the great progress that Maine has made in promoting self-reliance and local, healthy food systems, and it also reminds us that our work is just beginning Nearly 300,000 people in our state, including one in five children, do not have a reliable source of food Our state imports more than 90% of the food it consumes Our precious and finite agricultural land is threatened with residential, commercial and industrial development along with persistent, toxic and bioaccumulative chemicals like PFAS

LD 1823 underscores the urgency of systemic change in our food and agriculture systems It emphasizes more carrots than sticks from Maine's administrative departments to help Mainers grow, raise, harvest and produce food in a safe and lawful manner I would be happy to answer questions if you have any

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*The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) started in 1971 and is the oldest and largest state organic organization in the country We're a broad-based community that educates about and advocates for organic agriculture, illuminating its interdependence with a healthy environment, local food production, and thriving communities We have 15,000 members, we certify more than 500 organic farms and processing facilities representing \$90 million in sales, and we are working hard to provide training and create opportunities for Maine's next generation of farmers Each of these farmers is a Maine businessperson for whom economic health and environmental health are interdependent While MOFGA envisions a future of healthy ecosystems, communities, people and economies sustained by the practices of organic agriculture, we attribute our success to collaboration and outreach to growers across the management spectrum*

