



Wild Blueberry Commission OF MAINE

5784 York Complex, Suite 52, Orono, Maine 04469-5784

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May 13, 2021

c/o Clerk Etta Connors
Cross Building, Room 220
82 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333
Senator Nate Libby, Chair
Representative Genevieve McDonald, Chair

Dear Senator Libby and Representative McDonald,

I write you regarding the request to review the Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine (the "Commission").

My name is Eric Venturini, Executive Director of the Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine and I co-author this letter with Courtney Hammond. Courtney Hammond is a Maine wild blueberry farmer, Chair of the Commission's Fresh Pack and Value-Added Committee, and Co-Chair of the Maine Farm Bureau. Courtney is also the leading voice behind the Washington County Delegation's request to conduct a Government Oversight Committee (GOC) review of the Commission.

Both Courtney and I agree that Senator Dill, the Chair of ACF, brought an excellent idea into the discussion in the ACF Committee meeting on May 13 when he suggested giving the Commission time to work under its new organizational structure and suggested that the Commission brief the ACF in January of 2022 rather than initiating a GOC review at this time.

The Commission was reorganized under statute effective January 1st, 2020. Prior to 2020, there were 5 processor representatives and 3 grower representatives. On September 17th of 2020, Commissioner Beal appointed two growers to fill the two new grower seats. Today's Commission under the reorganized statute is a balanced board of 5 growers and 5 processors. This newly reorganized Commission has been in effect for 8 months. Senator Dill suggested giving the new Commission the time to work and the time to address the concerns raised. Both Courtney, a concerned grower, and I, representative of the Commission, agree that Senator Dill's suggestion is the best path forward.

For your convenience, I have attached to this email the materials submitted to the ACF for both the Commission briefing to ACF on April 13th and for the follow up discussion with ACF on May 13th. We look forward to suggestions from the GOC on how to best use the Maine wild blueberry tax to effectively and efficiently increase the prosperity of Maine's wild blueberry farms and businesses.



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Sincerely,

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cc: Representative Maggie O'Neil, Co-Chair of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
Senator James Dill, Chair of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
The Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine