



Troy D. Jackson  
President of the Senate

THE MAINE SENATE  
131st Legislature

3 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

**Testimony in Support of LD 315**  
***“An Act To Provide Funding for Drought Relief and Other Programs Benefiting Maine Farmers”***

**Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry**  
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Good morning Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. My name is Troy Jackson and I have the honor of serving as Senate President representing the good people of Aroostook County in the Maine Legislature. I am here today to testify in support of LD 315 “An Act to Provide Funding for Drought Relief and Other Programs Benefiting Maine Farmers.”

Last year, I appeared before this committee to introduce legislation to help farmers respond to drought conditions and improve irrigation in unorganized territories. The proposal – LD 1998, An Act To Establish a Disaster Relief Fund for Potato Farmers Adversely Affected by Drought Conditions – sought to create a grant program to help farmers respond to extreme weather conditions. Thanks to the work of this committee, the bill became law, setting up the Farmer Drought Assistance Fund.

The bill before you today, sponsored by Sen. Henry Ingwersen, D-Arundel, builds on this work and is critical to implementing the new program. The measure will help farmers navigate the challenges related to efficient and reliable access to water sources for irrigation. More importantly, the measure will allow the state to take a proactive approach by working with farmers to create sustainable irrigation systems.

Adapting to changes in growing conditions is something Maine farmers know well and have succeeded at, no matter how dry or rainy the year. However, as weather conditions become more extreme and periods of drought become more frequent, intense, and prolonged, ensuring that farmers can create more resilient irrigation systems *before* drought arrives is critical.

Since passing LD 1998, I have heard from numerous farmers who are interested in applying for these funds to create or enhance irrigation systems. Ensuring that the qualified field and office personnel presented in this bill are available to rapidly and helpfully administer the fund is an assurance that the state is committed to supporting farmers in a changing climate and economy where uncertainty can have extreme consequences. The positions presented in LD 315, which include two based in Northern Maine, will be imperative to the success of the Fund itself.

Thank you for your time today. I also want to thank Senator Ingwersen for bringing this bill forward and building on the work we did last year to help farmers with drought and irrigation.