

Sylvie Fenderson  
Maine Youth Power  
LD 1274

Chair Ingwersen and Chair Pluecker and the distinguished members of the Committee On Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry,

My name is Sylvie Fenderson. I was born in Freeport, I'm 23 years old, and have been working on farms in the midcoast area for the past three years. The farmers I get to work with every day, have a first-hand understanding of the ways that the economy, the environment and our communities are deeply interdependent. All three must be healthy for the others to thrive. This is why I'm writing to you today to ask that you support LD1274 An Act to Increase Land Access for Historically Disadvantaged Populations. This bill centers a lens of equity so that our Maine communities can be strong to face an often uncertain future together.

Our country and state have a long shameful history of racially motivated land dispossession by the state both through violent settler colonialism against Indigenous Peoples and through the institution of slavery. This history is felt in the present moment by Black and Indigenous people today in many different ways but lack of generational wealth because of centuries of oppression is a key barrier that creates inequitable access to resources and land here in the state. Land access is crucial in starting any agricultural enterprise and provides personal independence and dignity. Because of the ways the nation was built, land access is more difficult for some and I believe that is wrong. This bill takes a step towards removing that barrier and gives our communities a way forward that cares for the past and focuses on building a thriving future.

Please vote in support of LD1274 An Act to Increase Land Access for Historically Disadvantaged Populations.

Thank you for time in reviewing this testimony