

*In support of LD 1274: An Act to Increase Land Access for Historically Disadvantaged Populations.*

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

My name is Angie Tehuitzil, I live in Farmington, Maine, and I work at Maine Youth Power as a legislative fellow. We are a youth-led youth movement in Maine that engages youth to fight for their and others' future by focusing on bringing greater success in Maine. I am here today to ask that you support Senator Hickman's bill LD 1274: An Act to Increase Land Access for Historically Disadvantaged Populations.

While I live in Maine alone, I do come from a long-line family of Hispanic farmers, some out of the country and others from Texas who enjoy what they do. Similarly, I have realized that Maine also has a proud farming community that plays a crucial role in the state's economy. For Maine to keep flourishing we must now provide the opportunity for all, especially motorized groups to have access to land.

Everyone should be aware of America's truth being built through unfair colonization and slavery. For decades America didn't permit land access to any race or ethnicity other than white. While we can't fix the past, we can make the present better; America is made up of a wide range of people in which all should be equal.

Currently, many farm owners rely on migrant farmworkers to contribute to harvest crops and the agricultural wealth of Maine. The continued racial disparities can be observed in Maine's agriculture, due to not taking action on the barriers that have caused the decline in diverse farmers. According to the census of agriculture, out of the 3.4 million farmers, roughly 7% are Black or people of color. Maine holds a lot of immigrants that are eager to be a part of Maine agriculture and with open land and training can serve successful farmers in the state.

Members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, I urge you to support LD 1274, an incredible bill that we want to see pass and will establish a way for Black and other socially disadvantaged groups to be granted land to farm on in Maine. In order to keep the state thriving we need to encourage more diversity to move to Maine, which means we must make all feel equal.

Thank you for your time.

