



MOFGA Comments Regarding

LD 1511 - *An Act to Update the Laws Governing the University of Maine System's Board of Agriculture and to Rename the Maine Agricultural Experiment Station*

April 19, 2023

Dear 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). A broad-based community, MOFGA is creating a food system that is healthy and fair for all of us. Through education, training and advocacy, we are helping farmers thrive, making more local, organic food available and building sustainable communities. MOFGA certifies 535 organic farms and processing operations representing roughly \$90 million in sales and we are working hard to 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.

I am sorry I can't be with you at the public hearing today. I am submitting brief comments on the proposed changes to the laws governing the University of Maine System's Board of Agriculture (BOA). MOFGA has had a seat on the Board of Agriculture since the Board's inception in 1998. Ryan Dennett, MOFGA's Programs Director, represents us on the Board and has participated in discussions leading up to the proposed bill. In order for the Board to accomplish the charge laid out in the current statute we need changes that reflect the best interests of Maine's natural resource-based industries. We support updating the law and you will receive detailed edits for the legislation from the Board. We would like to underscore the following edits:

- The Bill's title suggests the Board of Agriculture is renaming the Experiment Station. The University renamed the Experiment Station, and the Board of Agriculture updated the entity name accordingly. MOFGA supports amending the title to remove "and Rename the Maine Agricultural Experiment Station."
- The Board approved assigning the following positions as *Ex Officio* members, which the current bill does not reflect.
 - Section 6. I. Two research faculty members associated with agricultural research at the University 31 of Maine at Orono, appointed by the Board of Trustees of the University of Maine 32 System
 - Section 6. J. The Director of the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Service or the 34 director's designee
 - Section 6. L. The Director of the Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station or the 38 director's designee

Thank you very much for your consideration of the proposed legislation.

Respectfully,

Heather Spalding – Deputy Director and Senior Policy Director

