



The Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry
Testimony from Dana O'Brien, President of FocusMaine

In Support Of

L.D. 1670

An Act to Strengthen Maine's Agriculture, Food and Forest Economy by Funding the Maine Agriculture, Food and Forest Products Investment Fund and Amending Related Provisions of Law

26 April 2023

Good morning, distinguished chairs and members of the committee. My name is Dana O'Brien, and I am the president of FocusMaine.

FocusMaine is a statewide economic development organization that propels our state's food economy and bioeconomy. We create and execute programs with partners to grow jobs and generate revenue for companies in these sectors. Investing in Maine's food economy will be key to achieving our long-term goals for Maine, which include 1) increasing the application of technology in Maine's food and seafood systems and 2) increasing market access for small- and mid-sized Maine food and seafood companies.

That is why FocusMaine supports L.D. 1670, an act to capitalize the Maine Agriculture, Food and Forest Products Investment Fund with \$20 million. This legislation would fill a gap in needed capital that would accelerate and deepen the impact of FocusMaine investments in business support programs in partnership with Coastal Enterprises Inc. (CEI), Maine Aquaculture Association (MAA), and Maine Center for Entrepreneurs (MCE).

The enactment of L.D. 1670 would result in the advancement of innovation, business growth, and job opportunities in early-stage and start-up food processing/manufacturing industries. These businesses provide employment and career pathways to Maine people and obtain their source materials from Maine growers/producers, thus maximizing the impact of each investment. We urge you to approve this measure to build a stronger, more resilient, and more prosperous agricultural economy in Maine.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.