



April 26, 2023

Springworks Farm Testimony in Support of LD 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*

Good morning, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and honorable members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. My name is Emily Donaldson, and I am the Director of Business Development at Springworks Farm in Lisbon Maine. I am writing on behalf of Springworks Farm to express our strong support for LD 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*.

At Springworks Farm, we use aquaponics to grow organic lettuce and tilapia in a closed-loop system that uses a fraction of the water required by conventional methods. In the U.S., over 95% of lettuce is grown in California and Arizona before being shipped across the country. At Springworks, our goal is to bolster our regional food system by growing local, organic lettuce year-round and create jobs in our community. Since 2014 we have grown incrementally to become the largest aquaponics producer in the Northeast, with over 40 full-time employees, and produce over 2M heads of lettuce a year. After we add our fourth greenhouse this summer, we will double the size of our team and increase production by over 300%.

Maine is a great place to be a farmer and an entrepreneur because of the network of organizations such as MTI, CEI, FAME, and Focus Maine (to name a few) that encourage innovation. By offering mentorship, technical, and material support, the public becomes a partner in shaping and strengthening the future of our regional food system. At Springworks, our growth has been the direct result of this dynamic community. As LD 1670 will help farmers make critical investments and informed decisions, I believe that its impact will be meaningful and far-reaching.

Thank you,

Emily Donaldson
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