



TO: The Joint Select Committee On Criminal Justice And Public Safety

RE: Written Testimony Provided in Favor of LD# 2053 “An Act To Exempt Buildings Used To Cultivate Crops From The Maine Uniform Building And Energy Code”

DATE OF HEARING: January 22, 2024

Honorable Senator Beebe-Center, Honorable Representative Salisbury, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,

The Good Food Council of Lewiston-Auburn (GFCLA) has been working since 2012 to support improvements to the food system in the Lewiston-Auburn Area. Our communities have thriving farms, both long-standing farms passed down through generations and newer farms run by immigrant farmers, and others new to our community. Demand for farmland continues. As you know, our growing season is very limited in Maine, so for most farmers, having greenhouses is an essential part of growing crops both to start the growing season early in the spring and to extend growing into the fall and winter.

Through surveys and work with local farmers and gardeners in Lewiston and Auburn, we have become aware of a challenge that creates an additional hurdle to erect greenhouses, and that is state law. The Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code (MUBEC) in effect state-wide and required to be enforced by municipalities over 4,000 in population, adds a complication that isn't necessary in the permitting of greenhouses / hoop houses. Law requires them to meet structural load requirements as though they are a permanent structure. Because of their

construction, this is difficult and sometimes impossible to meet. An exemption already exists from this requirement for structures housing livestock or storing produce, however it does not exist for the growing of crops.

In addition, this appears to be an important change needed statewide to ensure food access and production goals are met. For example, increased access to season-extending structures for farmers and gardeners is very much in alignment with recommendations in Maine's 129th Legislature and Gov. Janet T. Mills' plan for the ["Ending Hunger by 2030"](#) initiative related to both expansion of farm infrastructure and supporting food-self provisioning.

**The GFCLA supports expanding the existing MUBEC exemption and LD 2053, as a way to support farming and healthy food access in larger municipalities such as Lewiston and Auburn, without endangering the public.**

Sincerely,



**Julia Harper**

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