

Erica Emery
Farmington
LD 2169

February 5th, 2024

Dear Housing Committee,

I would like to submit testimony in support of the Workforce Housing Development Loan Fund. I own Rustic Roots Farm in Farmington, Maine. Our vegetable farm supplies fresh, local produce to our customers in Franklin County. Our business is at a critical point of growth in that demand for our vegetables outweighs our ability to produce vegetables affordably and economically. Labor is a huge cost for our farm and we do our best to try to keep up with “living wage” recommendations and always hire our farm workers at above minimum wage. In order for folks to accept our jobs at recommended “living wage” hourly rates, other support systems, like affordable housing, need to be present in our communities. I have been very impressed with efforts by our area ski resorts, Saddleback and Sugarloaf, in their approaches to workforce housing. I would like to see more affordable housing being developed that might not necessarily be linked to a specific employer, but more targeted towards working class people doing jobs like farming. A fund with low interest rates could attract both employers to consider developing workforce housing or even encourage development companies to begin projects aimed at those who don’t qualify for low income housing but who struggle to find housing that is affordable for them. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Erica Emery
Rustic Roots Farm