

W.R Allen, Inc

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Dear Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker and members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry my name is Simeon Allen, and I am the General Manager/ Co-Owner of W.R Allen Inc Located in Orland, Maine.

W.R Allen Inc is a family owned and operated wild blueberry farming and processing plant that has been in the family for 5 generations. Between our farms land and the land, we help manage for others in the area we harvest 500 acres per year which produces approximately 1.5 million pounds of wild blueberries.

Over the last 3 years the cost of growing wild blueberries has gone up approximately 30% in all aspects of the growing process and the manufacturing of the final product of wild blueberries. Currently the wild blueberry market is at a historic low price for wild blueberries and with that the price that is paid to the farmers is way below the cost of growing the fruit. With the cost of growing wild blueberries up 30% and the historic low price being paid to the farmer most farmers are losing money and will be forced to stop farming practices.

For all people involved this has been a very hard last two crops in our area with the severe lack of water in 2022 and the historic low prices in 2023 we are losing farmers that have been working these fields for decades. This is very sad for the wild blueberry community as growing this staple crop of Maine is more than just a job. It is our heritage and unless things change, I am worried it will be gone forever.

Today I ask that you all support the one-time relief for the farmers of Maine of the grower portion of the wild blueberry tax. This could save our growers over \$10,000 next year in which will help them with the uphill battle to become profitable again. Without wild blueberry growers we will lose the many centuries of wild blueberry heritage and lose many hard-working farmers that will have to stop farming due to financial loss.

Thank you for your time and I hope you will support the wild Maine blueberry farmers across the state and support LD 2256 today.

Simeon Allen
W.R Allen Inc