

Testimony of Jeannie M. Tapley, Assistant Executive Director, Maine Potato Board to the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing

March 26, 2024

LD 2273– An Act to Establish a State Minimum Hourly Wage for Agricultural Workers

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and members of the Labor and Housing Committee; I am Jeannie Tapley, Assistant Executive Director for the Maine Potato Board (MPB) and am here to speak in support of LD2273: An Act to Establish a State Minimum Hourly Wage for Agricultural Workers.

First, I would like to thank Governor Mills for creating the stakeholder working group, that I was thankful to be asked to participate in, to continue the ag worker minimum wage conversations and report back to her; resulting in this bill.

The Maine Potato Industry has always taken great pride in what we do, how we take care of the land, provide healthy, quality food to Maine residents and beyond; this also includes taking care of our employees and therefore, we fully support paying farmworkers the state minimum wage. This bill allows for our farmworkers to receive that minimum wage, but doesn't add other requirements that can cause unintended consequences and major hardship for our family farms. This bill takes into account the unique nature of agricultural production and we feel this bill as written is a perfect balance between supporting the potato farmers and farmworkers alike.

Thank you to Governor Mills and the sponsors of LD2273 for a bill that as written we are happy to be able to support. I am available to answer any questions you have today and will also be available at the work session. Thank you for your time.