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Esteemed Committee Members, thank you for taking the time to consider this testimony. I'm writing to express my heartfelt support for the continuation of Domestic Trade grants for Maine businesses seeking to build new markets for Maine products.

I am a Co-Founder and Chief Innovation Officer at Luke's Lobster. We are a Maine seafood brand that buys millions of pounds of lobster and other seafood directly from Maine fishermen and sells it into markets around the country through our restaurant group, our branded supermarket meals, our direct-to-consumer website, and through wholesale channels.

Domestic Trade Grants we've received allowed us to reach and build relationships with grocery buyers, ultimately resulting in our placement of Maine lobster products in numerous grocery chains around the country that previously carried no Maine lobster and that we had been unable to access.

By extension, we reached new consumers in many new places around the US. Those new customers increased the demand for our lobster, which in turn increased our purchases from Maine fishermen, and therefore helped to drive the historic high prices that Maine's lobstermen received for their catch in 2024. Our relationships with these supermarkets and customers were not one-time transactions. They are ongoing relationships that will continue to move Maine lobster from the dock to consumer plates, and will thus buoy Maine's lobster industry for the foreseeable future.

Direct support for companies seeking to expand their domestic market is extremely effective at increasing sales of Maine's natural resources and other products, and these investments from the state are returned many times over in that increased revenue, money in the pockets of harvesters and their families and communities, and an increased tax base for the state.

I sincerely hope that this budget passes and that more Maine companies are able to benefit from these grants. Thank you again for your time and consideration.