



Testimony of Caitlin Gilmet to the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry

February 6, 2025

Co-Director, Maine Families for Vaccines

LD 113 – An Act to Require Food Labels to Disclose Use of Messenger Ribonucleic Acid Vaccine Material in Food Production

Good Morning, Chair Talbot Ross and Chair Plueker, and Honorable members of the Committee:

My name is Caitlin Gilmet, and I am the Co-Director of Maine Families for Vaccines. I'm not a scientist. My background is actually in post-colonial literature, not immunology or veterinary medicine. But I do know a bit about agriculture.

Before my work in vaccine advocacy, I started my career at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy in Minneapolis, where I worked on removing bisphenol A from baby bottles, raising awareness of radon in wells, researching mercury in fish and arsenic in chicken feed, and exposing toxic chemical use in concentrated animal feeding operations.

I am also a mom, and like all parents, I want to know that the food I give my family is safe, nutritious, and free from harmful chemicals. That's why I fully support the work of this committee to protect Maine families from toxic chemicals and ensure transparency in our food system. Your diligence in researching these issues and making decisions that safeguard our health and environment is critically important. I also strongly support our local farmers and recognize that LD 113 would place unnecessary burdens on their businesses, adding confusion without any scientific basis.

I understand the importance of knowing what goes into our food and consumer products, and I care deeply about this issue. But I also know that when we discuss policies related to food and health, we must be guided by science—not misinformation.

Two weeks ago, I lost the mentor who first taught me about agriculture policy. Kate, my boss and friend of 25 years, died from an aggressive cancer. Kate was a fierce champion for farmers and the environment, and she was passionate about agricultural and health science. As her cancer progressed, she enrolled in multiple clinical trials—not just hoping to save her own life, but to contribute to scientific progress so that future patients might have better outcomes.

When someone you love is told, "There are no more options", that's when mRNA starts to matter in a way that's impossible to ignore. mRNA technology represents potential—a chance at something beyond what we currently know how to do. It is well-researched, safe, and could be a literal lifeline for countless patients like Kate.

mRNA technology represents one of the most promising advancements in modern medicine, with the potential to revolutionize both human and animal health. In human medicine, mRNA vaccines have already saved millions of lives by providing rapid, effective protection against infectious diseases like COVID-19, and ongoing research suggests they could play a crucial role in developing vaccines for cancer, HIV, and other complex diseases. In veterinary medicine, mRNA vaccines offer a faster, more adaptable approach to preventing devastating livestock diseases, reducing the need for antibiotics, and protecting global food security. By harnessing the body's natural ability to produce targeted immune responses, mRNA technology has the power to drive medical innovation, improve public health, and save countless lives.

As a mom, I want what's best for my family. As someone who has worked in agriculture policy, I want what's best for our farmers. And as an advocate for public health, I want Maine to continue to be a leader in evidence-based, common sense decision-making.

LD 113 does not make our food safer, nor does it protect our families. Instead, it adds unnecessary burdens to Maine farmers, misleads consumers, and fuels vaccine misinformation. I urge this committee to continue making the best decisions for our families and environment based on science and common sense—and vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 113.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions.