

Melissa Andrews
Peace Ridge Sanctuary
LD 124

Senator Talbot-Ross, Representative Pluecker, and other Honorable Members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee:

Peace Ridge Sanctuary is a Maine-based nonprofit animal shelter that was founded in 2001 and is one of the largest animal shelter systems in the country, providing emergency rescue, rehabilitation, sanctuary, and adoption services to hundreds of farmed animals, equines, and dogs on any given day. Our facilities are licensed by the state of Maine and accredited by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries.

The animals we rescue come primarily from local cruelty and neglect cases where animals were seized by local law enforcement, animal welfare agents, or animal control officers for egregious violations of state animal welfare laws. Our shelter services allows the state to intervene in farmed animal cruelty cases in particular.

Maine's animal welfare laws are common sense safeguards to minimize suffering and require things like animals having access to water, food, and shelter—the absolute basics.

When animals are legally seized from these situations, it is common to find animals who have suffered to death from neglect and cruelty. Our shelters take the surviving animals, who always arrive in dire condition, and rehabilitate them. We've seen firsthand how necessary it is to have animal welfare laws to protect animals in our state from the worst suffering. And we also know Mainers don't support cruelty to animals going unchecked.

LD 124 proposes definitions to “food sovereignty” and “traditional food pathways” that can be construed in practice to give individuals standing to refute or ignore established animal welfare laws found in Maine Revised Statutes Title 7 and Title 17. The definitions as proposed are broad and open to liberal interpretation and practice. We strongly urge that language be added to LD 124 that explicitly states that all existing and future state and federal animal welfare laws must still be adhered to. Without this type of protection for animals, it opens the doors for unspeakable animal cruelty and prevents those tasked with ensuring basic animal welfare laws from doing their jobs.