

kathy shaw
Valley View Farm Auburn
LD 1198

Good Afternoon Members of the DACF committee.

My name is Kathy Shaw, I am the owner of a small farm in Auburn Maine and am a former member of this committee..

I am writing today to offer my support for LD1198: A Resolve , Directing the Department of Agriculture , Conservation And Forestry to Assess Its Current Meat and Poultry Inspection Programs.

Regretfully , due to prior work commitments, I am unable to attend this hearing in person to offer testimony.

I urge this committee to move this resolve forward to help relieve the roadblocks in place for small producers that are looking to expand their farm offerings by the processing of local meats.

Over the past year, I have had conversations with Mr Lapine and Commissioner Amanda Beal regarding the confusing wording , endless “switchbacks”and difficulty in navigating the current wording for the meat and poultry inspection programs. I have listened in on lengthy conversations between my husband and other officials of the Department as he attempts to understand CLEARLY what is or is not allowed. We have poured over the documents provided from the state regarding rules and regulations that processors need to understand and comply with... and spent hours of our time , hours! Only to be more confused ...there should be a clearer way.

I operated a small local foods store in New Auburn for 5 years and when I initially opened the store had a congenial working relationship with the then inspector Marshall Piper. Mr Piper clearly explained the rules and regulations that we needed to comply with and was very willing to help us move forward and succeed...Now, I hear horrible stories almost every week about the inspectors , and their interpretations of the rules, their heavy-handed approach to producers and unwilling attitude to help our small producers become successful. And not long after Mr Piper retired, we “enjoyed “ visits from inspectors that were aggressive, hostile and intimidating.

I am not sure when this shift occurred and why these rules and regulations are so confusing. I am positive that there is a better way forward, there should be a cleaner, easier set of regulations for producers to follow.

In a state that values the production of local foods , many small farmers are being forced to close shop or farm because it is difficult (and farming takes an incredible leap of faith) to operate an agricultural operation in our state without running up against some type of rule, regulation or law that forbids poultry or meat production.

As a state, we owe it to our consumers and producers to be able to offer fresh locally produced foods for our good health and wellbeing. I have not met a farmer yet that intentionally and knowingly wants to harm their customers, neighbors and friends through tainted product. That does not make any type of good business sense. But the rules to comply should be clear, easy to read and interpret.

I thank you for your time today, and urge your support of this resolve.

Sincerely

Kathy Shaw
Valley View Farm,
Auburn Maine.