



Maine Grocers &
Food Producers
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**IN SUPPORT – LD 1252 An Act to Amend the Laws Governing the Maine Agriculture, Food System and Forest Products
Infrastructure Investment Advisory Board**

Dear Senator Talbot Ross – Chair, Representative Pluecker - Chair, and members of the Committee on Agriculture,
Conservation and Forestry,

My name is Christine Cummings and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Grocers & Food Producers Association (MGFPA). The Maine Grocers & Food Producers Association is a business trade association representing Maine's food community; Main Street businesses, including independently owned and operated grocery stores and supermarkets, food and beverage producers and processors, manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors, and supportive service companies.

Maine's food producers and farmers have a significant economic impact here in Maine; Maine's total direct economic impact across agriculture, manufacturing, wholesaling, and on and off-premise retailing creates more than 109,000 jobs, \$4B in wages and \$15B in output.¹ Maine's food producers and farmers are the backbone of our local economy and food system. Maine's agricultural and forest-based industries are integral to our economy, supporting thousands of jobs and contributing to our state's identity and sustainability.

This bill affirms the commitment to investing in local producers by ensuring that disbursements from the Fund are allocated to those who are actively operating or establishing processing or manufacturing facilities within Maine. This provision is essential in bolstering the infrastructure needed to enhance our local supply chains, increase value-added production, and create new economic opportunities for farmers, food processors, and forest product manufacturers.

We appreciate that the bill specifically notes, "In carrying out these purposes, the producer shall obtain, **to the extent practicable**, agricultural, food or forest products from a farm or a forest or waters in the State or from offshore waters to be collected in the State." Although this is somewhat open-ended, we hope that it provides enough flexibility as procuring local food and ingredients for food production in Maine presents some challenges, including seasonal limitations, supply chain constraints, and higher costs compared to mass-produced alternatives. Some food producers often face logistical hurdles in sourcing local ingredients at scale. We hope that by strengthening local procurement policies and funding, it can help address these barriers creating stronger market connections, and supporting Maine's agricultural economy year-round.

The bill also introduces governance measures by prohibiting members of the advisory board from participating in votes when they have a conflict of interest. This provision is a critical safeguard to ensure that the Fund is administered transparently and fairly, maintaining public trust and ensuring that resources are distributed equitably to deserving producers without undue influence.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Christine Cummings
Executive Director

¹ *The 2024 Feeding the Economy report*