April 9, 2025

The Milkhouse
445 South Monmouth Road
Monmouth, ME 04259
207-933-8184
mainemilkhouse@gmail.com

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs,

We own and operate The Milkhouse, an organic dairy located in Monmouth. We farm 250 acres of hay and pasture, milk about 40 Jersey cows, as well as produce beef and pork. Our farm also runs a state licensed creamery, and between the creamery and farm operation we employ up to 10 people during the peak growing season. As of January The Milkhouse is the only commercial dairy farm left in Monmouth, a town that not too long ago was home to many. We are writing to express our support for LD 362, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Replenish the Land for Maine's Future Program.

In 2015 we purchased our farm in Monmouth. This was made financially possible with a conservation easement held by Maine Farmland Trust which reduced the purchase price substantially and ensured the land stays available for farming in perpetuity. Easements are a common tool used by young farmers to acquire their farms and have only become more necessary with the increase in property values since the pandemic.

To put the current state of the real estate market in perspective, 10 years ago we purchased a 280 acre former dairy farm for less money than our neighbor's modest single family home on under 2 acres just sold for. A decade ago the barriers to farm ownership for young farmers were already high, now they feel nearly impossible. If Maine is going to have any chance of meeting its goals of increasing local food production laid out in our climate action plan, Maine Won't Wait, then many thousands of acres more of farmland need to be protected by easements. This will help keep farmland prices affordable and the land available for the next generation. Funding from the Land for Maine's Future Program is crucial in this effort and we urge you to support this proposed bond measure.

Sincerely,
Andrew Smith
Caitlin Frame