

LD 1140 An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Strengthen the Resilience and Growth of Maine's Agricultural Industry

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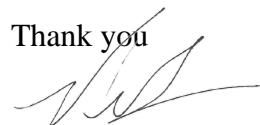
Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the committee I am Penny Jordan, one of the owners of Jordan's Farm a 5th generation mixed vegetable farm in Cape Elizabeth and I am testifying in favor of LD 1140.

We till 60-70 acres a season of mixed vegetables to supply our onsite farm stand, wholesale customers and several food pantries and food banks to help address hunger in Cumberland County. We work with over 15 farms to supply our farm stand. Our goal is to ensure a viable business for the next generation while helping grow Maine agriculture.

Investment in farm businesses can have a significant impact. One example is in 2023 we were awarded a \$250,000 USDA Value Added Producer Grant for a three-year plan to grow our customer base, develop ultra value-added products to sell through our farm stand as well as wholesale through small grocers and distributors. In the first year (2024) with the help of these funds we were able to increase our farm stand sales by over 35%. We redesigned our website, invested in online social media, branded our ultra value-added products and put four of our products on the shelves of 6 local stores. In addition, because we had a relationship with a mid-sized processor, and we had the funds, we were able to use thousands of pounds of our tomatoes to produce a marinara sauce that hit the shelves in October 2024. This grant has been a game changer for our business and for our farm partners.

Other game changers for farms include investment in equipment for planting, harvesting, processing and storage. These investments help farms gain efficiency and, in many instances, increase production. I know because we invested in a root vegetable harvester in 2023. We have increased production of carrots and plan to enter the market with a branded product in 2025. The next is to upgrade processing equipment (washing and packing equipment) and increase cooler space. These are significant investments and will have a significant impact.

I recognize \$45,000,000 is a big ask but I hope you can find a way to support LD 1140 because it will truly help strengthen Maine's agricultural economy. I know because I have seen how a significant grant has helped our farm diversify products and expand markets and position the business for the next generation.

Thank you


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