



Maine Potato Board

744 Main Street

Presque Isle, ME 04769

(207) 769-5061

FAX 764-4148

mainepotatoes.com

**Testimony of Jeannie M. Tapley, Executive Director,
Maine Potato Board to the Joint Standing Committee on Labor**

April 23, 2025

**LD 952: An Act to Exempt Agricultural Employers and Employees from the
Maine Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program**

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and members of the Labor Committee; I am Jeannie Tapley, Executive Director for the Maine Potato Board (MPB) and I apologize for not being able to be there in person for the public hearing.

I would like to express the MPB's support of LD 952: An Act to Exempt Agricultural Employers and Employees from the Maine Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program.

In Maine, we have very limited time in which to plant, raise and harvest crops, in the potato industry, that is approximately 120 days. Agriculture is also faced with factors that we have no control over such as adverse weather that can completely halt the work we need to do in the fields. Understanding the limitations agriculture has as it relates to when and how long you have to work given various conditions, having potentially multiple employees out for 12 weeks during crucial times of production could mean we wouldn't be able to get the crops out of the ground in time.

With already being at a disadvantage due to the short growing season, the decrease in available local labor, especially in rural areas such as Aroostook County, makes it nearly impossible to find replacement workers on short notice. We are in support of LD 952 because we believe this takes into account the seasonal nature of agriculture in Maine and the need to have employees working during the critical times of planting and harvesting the crops.

The Maine Potato Industry wants to help be part of reaching the goal of 30% of the food consumed in Maine is grown in Maine by 2030 and having farmworkers out for 12 weeks during the growing season will greatly hinder our ability to help achieve that goal. We ask that you vote ought to pass on LD 952. Thank you for your time and I will be available for the work session and can provide any additional information necessary.