

**Testimony of Jeannie M. Tapley, Executive Director, Maine Potato Board to the
Committee on Environment and Natural Resources**

May 19, 2025

LD 1982 - An Act to Ensure Uniformity in the Regulation of PFAS

Good morning, esteemed members of the Environment and Natural Resource Committee I am Jeannie Tapley, Executive Director of the Maine Potato Board, and am in support of LD 1982. We would like to thank Representative Arata as well as the co-sponsors for sponsoring LD 1982 and the ENR Committee for hearing this bill today. My apologies that I can't be there with you in person.

The Maine Potato Board (MPB) was created in 1986 by an act of the Maine Legislature for the purpose of establishing a cohesive framework for effective leadership within the potato industry. The mission of the MPB is to provide a competitive environment for Maine's potato growers, processors, and dealers, and to create both stability and the infrastructure for future growth. Today the MPB represents 252 growers, 23 dealers, and 4 processors.

Our support of LD 1982 is not only on behalf of the potato industry but all of agriculture in Maine. While agriculture may not have the visible economic impact of other industries in Maine, the impact is meaningful; particularly in the rural areas of the State of Maine. According to USDA, the economic impact of agriculture in Maine is \$2.9 billion and supports 17,026 jobs for Maine residents. The potato industry's part of this impact is \$1.3 billion, 6,570 jobs generating \$237 million of income for employees in this state. These numbers are only for the actual production of agricultural crops, when the valued-added impact taken into account the overall economic impact of potato production in Maine is over \$11 billion supporting 27,000 jobs none of which happens without the actual production of the crop.

LD 1982 would allow for the uniformity of the Maine PFAS definition to align with the United States Environmental Protection Agency definition. The products used for production and protection of crops in Maine are all regulated by or under the jurisdiction of: The United States Food and Drug Administration; The United States Department of Agriculture; or The United State Environmental Protection Agency pursuant to the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA).

Currently all crop protectants used in Maine for agriculture production must be registered with Maine's Board of Pesticide Controls (BPC); LD 1982 would not change the registration and regulation of products with the BPC.

We understand the concern about PFAS in our environment and support the sound and scientific work that is going on today on removing PFAS from the environment. The research relating to the effects, control and replacement of PFAS is evolving but it will

take time for all of this to happen. During this period, we have to understand that while doing what we can to eliminate PFAS, we also have to continue to allow businesses and industry to move forward. LD 1982 will allow us to continue to use the regulated products we have; without this there is risk of losing products, which will have a negative impact on our ability to grow and protect our crops. It puts us at a great disadvantage when competing in the market with other potato producing states that do not have Maine's regulations.

The impact of PFAS on farmland in Maine is not from the application of crop protectants but from the approved and recommended application of sludge at very high levels, the impact that the agricultural producer had no idea what would eventually happen to their land. The products used for the growing and protection of agriculture crops in Maine are applied at a rate of ounces per acre with the number applications limited by the regulatory agency (EPA). Following Integrated Pest Management Practices (IPM); we can't risk losing any of the tools in the tool box for the protection of our crops, the most important aspect to IPM is scout and spray only when needed. Another key element is to target the best chemistry to the need for the pest or disease and don't use more of any one chemistry then necessary to avoid resistance.

We ask that you support LD 1982 which will allow agricultural producers in Maine to remain sustainable and competitive during the period when research will lead us to a time when PFAS will no longer be part of the products we use. Thank you for your time and I will be happy to answer any questions today or during the work session.