

Judy Taylor Gagnon
Cumberland County Fair
LD 2026

Good afternoon, Senator Talbot-Ross, Representative Pluecker and distinguished members of the Agricultural, Conservation and Forestry Committee. My name is Judy Taylor Gagnon and I am a member of the Cumberland County Fair and a staff member of the Cumberland Fair Exhibition Hall. I am here today to testify in favor of LD 2026, representing the Superintendents of the Exhibition Hall of Cumberland County Fair, Carolyn Small and Lynn Copp. We are concerned about, as are many other Exhibition Hall Superintendents, the ruling that judging of the contests should be during the fair times for the following reasons:

1. Last year we had 2,396 items to be judged, ribboned and displayed. At only one minute each to judge, that is over almost 40 hours of time. That's why we need two days for the 24 judges that work for us. Losing two days of our seven-day Fair would be devastating.
2. Safety is a great concern. If judging is done with fairgoers coming through the Hall at the same time, a traffic flow danger is created. Also, with the staff attempting to creatively and safely display entries after they have been judged, teetering around on ladders and the display of shelves with visitors coming through, another safety issue is created.
3. Next is the security of entries. How do we protect the entries if they are on tables in the aisles while they are being judged while visitors are passing through? If entries are on the tables to be judged, they are then at risk of being unprotected with the possibility of being stolen or damaged. If fairgoers are viewing them, there is the hazard of spills or greasy fingers touching things or powdered sugar falling on them. If drinks are spilled on photographs, paper crafts or watercolor paintings, they are completely ruined.
4. Should the entries be on display before being judged? How can they then be examined thoroughly? Quilts hanging up cannot be properly assessed from the floor.
5. Anonymity for most of the judges is a significant element. Provocation, hassling and aggressive questions are big concerns here. If an entrant should happen to be present while their entry is being judged, they could question the judgement. Distraction is another issue for the judges. If they have to answer questions while they are judging, they cannot focus on the job at hand, and that increases the demand and pressure of their time.
6. We use our tables to place entries on while the judges are working. As each item is judged, members of our staff then attach the ribbon and put the ribboned items in the display areas. After all the judging is completed, the tables are then put in place for our demos. So, do we display the items first for the judges to not be able to accurately and meticulously do the job, or do we use the tables, as we have forever done, and lose two days of people doing demos for us? The demo folks are all willing to interact with and educate visitors about their crafts, so losing any days is counter-productive. We at the Fairs are supposed to be the promoters, educators, advocates and supporters of Maine agriculture, and we are being stifled in doing our job appropriately.
7. There are other events and entries at Cumberland Fair that are judged during the fair. The giant pumpkin/squash contest, judging of fresh fruits and vegetables done by the State of Maine Horticulturist, the whoopie pie contest, the decorated and tasting cupcake contest, and the State of Maine Two Crusted Apple Pie contest are all judged during the week; thus, we are compliant with this ruling with those events.
8. The definition of exhibition is displaying, showing, presenting and demonstrating. Nowhere in that definition does judging exist.
9. While the 24-hour factor being proposed by LD 2026 is certainly helpful, it still lacks enough time for our jobs to be done comprehensively. Our ultimate hope is that you will see these concerns and build an allowance for the exhibition halls at Maine fairs to do their judging in the days prior to their Fair opening.

Yours very sincerely from the Cumberland Fair Exhibition Hall,
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