



Testimony in Support of LD 1999:

“An Act to Exclude Agricultural Leases from the Definition of "Subdivision" Under the Planning and Land Use Regulation Laws”

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and the distinguished members of the Committee On Housing and Economic Development, my name is Harris Van Pate, and I am a policy analyst at Maine Policy Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that works to advance individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 1999.

This bill makes a narrow but meaningful correction to Maine’s subdivision law by clarifying that agricultural leases, where no fee simple ownership is transferred, and no permanent residential structures are built, should not be treated as formal subdivisions under the state’s planning and land use regulation statutes.

Protecting Productive Use of Land Without Bureaucratic Burden

LD 1999 promotes agricultural activity by removing an unnecessary layer of government oversight from private agreements between landowners and farmers. Requiring a full subdivision review for a temporary or long-term lease of land used solely for farming imposes disproportionate costs and administrative burdens on Mainers seeking to use their land productively. It creates barriers to land access, particularly for new or small-scale farmers who lease property rather than purchase it outright.

By clarifying that these leases do not trigger subdivision regulation, LD 1999 respects private property rights and helps preserve farmland for its intended use without undermining municipal planning goals.

Supporting Market-Driven Agriculture

Importantly, this reform requires no new government spending, no new bureaucracy, and no subsidies. Instead, it reduces government interference, empowering individuals to enter into voluntary agreements, promoting agricultural innovation, and fostering access to land consistent with both tradition and modern farming practices. This is an utmost necessity with the new pressure Maine’s agricultural industry now faces from the recent changes to the minimum wage for agricultural workers.

The bill still maintains safeguards by excluding leases that allow for the construction of permanent residential dwellings, ensuring it does not unintentionally encourage rural sprawl or development loopholes.



Conclusion

LD 1999 offers a well-calibrated reform that strengthens agricultural opportunity and land-use flexibility while maintaining appropriate boundaries for residential development. It embodies the kind of focused, market-friendly policy change that helps remove barriers for Maine's rural economy and honors our state's commitment to land stewardship through liberty and personal responsibility.

Maine Policy Institute urges the committee to support this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.