

2026
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Maine's Rural Development Council

**Testimony of Nancy Smith, CEO of GrowSmart Maine
in SUPPORT of LD 2094, An Act To Authorize A General Fund Bond
Issue To Support Maine's Agricultural And Forestry Sectors**
January 20, 2026

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs,

GrowSmart Maine is a statewide non-partisan non-profit organization helping communities navigate change in alignment with smart growth. We advocate for smart growth policies and investments, share in thought leadership, host convenings, and provide technical assistance toward smart growth practices and outcomes. All this to ensure Maine communities are places where people feel safe, that they belong, and where they can thrive.

This bond proposal hits all the marks for us, because the heritage industries of agriculture and forestry, along with marine fisheries and aquaculture, are at the center of Maine's heritage and our future. Public investments in critical infrastructure are essential to the viability and longevity of these sectors.

I would emphasize the urgency of funding directed at protecting access to working agricultural lands as the most critical component of this bond proposal. If we lose the land, we lose the battle.

I say this as I look back on my career first as a forester, and then as a dairy farmer. In both instances, business decisions were driven both by management of assets here in Maine, and the challenges from across the country and globally. That has continued in the nearly twenty years since I was working in farming and forestry, creating a greater challenge for today's business owners and workforce, as well as those considering their future in these sectors.

Maine's forest manufacturing and agricultural sectors continue to face challenges from outside our state. For the future viability of these industries, Maine should make key investments today. Our economy, communities, and environment all benefit when forestry and farming provide sustainable and profitable opportunities.

