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Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations

RE: LD 2094 - An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Support Maine's Agricultural and Forestry Sectors

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations, my name is Kaitlyn Nuzzo and I am the Government Relations Director for The Nature Conservancy in Maine. **I appreciate this opportunity to submit written comments in support of LD 2094 - An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Support Maine's Agricultural and Forestry Sectors.**

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. We use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners. The Nature Conservancy has been leading conservation in Maine for more than 60 years and is the 12th largest landowner in the state, owning and managing roughly 300,000 acres. We also work across Maine to restore rivers and streams, partner with fishermen in the Gulf of Maine to rebuild groundfish populations, and develop innovative solutions to address our changing climate.

Our organization has long recognized the importance of Maine's natural resource industries. As a forest landowner we have prioritized sustainable timber management and harvesting to help maintain regional economic opportunities, encourage new forest-products development, and capture and hold carbon within those innovative products themselves.

We believe in the mission and work of the Maine Agriculture, Food System and Forest Products Infrastructure Investment Fund (AFFPIF) and support this effort to add critical capital to the fund. The Advisory Board overseeing this fund is made up of a wide range of experts across the farming and forestry sectors and we believe this effort to make significant additional capital available through this fund could be a catalyst for positive impact on these sectors in our state. We are especially excited to see how an additional \$12M in this fund dedicated to supporting Maine's forest products economy could drive innovation and investment in this space.

Investments in Maine's forestry and farming industries have enormous potential and we urge the committee to support the investments represented in LD 2094.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment, I'm happy to answer questions at any time.