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Testimony LD 2096

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Good afternoon esteemed members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is David Andrews, I am the General Superintendent at Fryeburg Fair.

Maine has fairs of all sizes; we have common goals to promote agriculture and create community events in our state. As our industry changes, we as fairs must change or we will be left behind.

After consulting with a representative of the Department of Agriculture, Fryeburg Fair added the first Saturday. That extra day is the focus of this bill. We added this day because for years, many of our vendors have asked us to add Saturday. Those vendors include approximately 40 non-profit, civic organizations who make most of their operating revenue during the fair. This extra day affords the Fair some rain insurance as our large overhead does not diminish during rain events but our revenue suffers greatly.

Some in the fair industry still believe that there are two segments to their fair, the carnival and the fair. Carnivals and fairs should be partners working together because without a carnival and all they bring with them, food venders, rides and shopping, most fairs would be hard pressed to cover the overhead of operating.

Before 2017, the United States had more than 400 carnival operators. We have lost more than half of the carnivals which now total about 170 operators. This would indicate to me that the remaining carnivals will at some point start to pick and choose the fairs that offer the best business opportunities for them. The fairs that operate Sunday to Saturday may want to consider filling those weekend dates as the Sunday to Saturday dates are becoming less desirable for carnivals because of the loss of a whole weekend. Fairs at some point may be asked to renegotiate their carnival dates.

Maine fairs are already at a disadvantage because of our Geographic location. I have asked carnivals at the National Conference if they would be interested in coming to Maine to operate. Due to the cost and travel time associated with our location as well as incomplete weekends, those that were asked could not accommodate Maine.

I am opposed to LD 2096. Maine fairs need the flexibility to adjust, add or reduce dates as needed as long as they are fulfilling their missions.

I am asking you to kill this bill as it will have a negative impact on fairs, and create barriers that will hinder the prosperity and ability to change as the industry changes.

Thank you for your time.

David Andrews