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January 28, 2026

Senator Henry Ingwersen, Chair
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 2144 – Resolve, to Establish the Working Group to Prioritize Wellness and Mental Health Resources for Heritage Industries

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

Thank you for the opportunity to support LD 2144, *Resolve, to Establish the Working Group to Prioritize Wellness and Mental Health Resources for Heritage Industries*. The Department of Health and Human Services joins our partner agencies in recognizing the importance of wellbeing in Maine's heritage industries and the need for ongoing supports.

If passed, this bill would create the Working Group to Prioritize Wellness and Mental Health Resources for Heritage Industries, of which the Commissioner of Health and Human Services, or her designee, would serve as a co-chair.

Research shows that those who work in agriculture, forestry, logging, and fishing can be underserved in the behavioral health space as their workplaces are often rooted in values such as endurance, loyalty, and self-reliance. Further, many of these jobs have limited benefits, meaning behavioral health coverage may be minimal, poorly communicated, or not tailored to non-standard schedules and seasonal work patterns.

We know that during challenging times, such as the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the mass casualty event in Lewiston, wellbeing resources can be important buoys for all people. Particularly for folks in heritage industries navigating challenges like PFAS on farmland and in livestock or changing weather patterns that make their work unpredictable, these lifelines can be a stabilizing force.

We recognize that with some COVID-19 and other resources phasing or phased out and growing challenges for heritage industry proprietors and workers, the time is ripe for a cross-cutting discussion about how to support these important industries. We are glad to be included as a collaborator and see the benefit of this proposal.

The Department welcomes the opportunity to partner with DACF and the Department of Marine Resources, to share our behavioral health expertise, and to learn from others so that we can

identify and address critical gaps in service delivery and strengthen healthcare resources across the state.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions during your deliberation of this bill.

Sincerely,



Molly Bogart
Deputy Commissioner
Maine Department of Health and Human Services