



**Testimony of Shelley Megquier, Policy & Research Director, Maine Farmland Trust,
to the 132nd Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
February 25, 2026**

Good afternoon Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. My name is Shelley Megquier and I am providing testimony today on behalf of Maine Farmland Trust (MFT) in opposition to LD 2174 as amended, *An Act to Increase Predictability in the Permitting of Renewable Energy Development*.

MFT is a member-powered statewide organization that works to protect farmland, support farmers, and advance the future of farming. Our goals are to keep agricultural lands working and help farmers and their communities thrive. Since our founding in 1999, MFT has helped to permanently protect farmland in every county in Maine, amounting to over 58,000 acres across 395 farms. Our Farm Network includes more than 550 farms that have participated in MFT's programming either through an agricultural easement or through one of our other areas of work. Our main program areas are Farmland Protection, Farmland Access, Stewardship, Farm Business Planning, PFAS Support, and Policy and Research.

Municipalities across Maine recognize both the benefits of and threats to agriculture and working lands in their communities. Many municipalities have formally identified farmland protection and support for farms as priorities in locally adopted policies and plans. It is important for towns to have a range of policy tools available to them to advance these priorities, including the option of adopting solar ordinances that enable solar energy generation while also ensuring the site location of solar development protects agricultural resources, ensures access to farmland for agricultural use, and supports farm business viability. **MFT wants to put forward the concern that LD 2174 as amended will limit the tools that are available to municipalities to balance these important interests and advance established, locally identified priorities and planning goals.**

MFT provides guidance resources and direct technical assistance to towns that are seeking to advance farm-friendly policy strategies, including through ordinances that regulate solar energy development. Many municipalities have adopted solar ordinances that contain siting and approval standards that protect agricultural resources and are tied to the goals of established local policies or plans, such as zoning ordinances and comprehensive plans. Examples include standards or provisions such as those that restrict the percentage of the solar project that can be located on farmland soils, disincentivize siting on land located within a locally adopted natural areas plan, and require review by a municipal agricultural committee to ensure that proposed solar energy projects will not diminish the potential for agriculture in the community. Provisions like these are targeted and specific to local conditions and contexts. A town may also determine that they want to limit commercial solar development to dual-use agricultural and



solar production arrays—those that are intentionally designed to accommodate agricultural activities—for projects proposed on active farmland or open land containing important farmland soils (which may extend to unique or locally important soils that are not necessarily considered as part of areas of state law applicable to solar energy development).

The local control limitations proposed by LD 2174 seek to prohibit municipalities from enacting or enforcing a local land use or zoning ordinance or other local standard, condition or requirement applicable to solar energy developments that is more stringent than the standards, conditions or requirements of, among other areas of state statute identified in the bill, Title 38, Chapter 35: Protection of Agricultural Soils from Solar Energy Developments, and its associated rules. MFT believes that solar energy generation and agriculture can co-exist in Maine in a mutually beneficial manner as long as solar development is sited in ways that minimize impacts to agricultural resources. For this reason, we were pleased to engage in the policy development and rulemaking process for LD 1881—which was enacted in the 131st Legislature as P.L. 2023, ch. 448 and is administered in part by the rules associated with Title 38, Chapter 35—and we fully support the state level guardrails that have been put in place by this state law and associated rules.

MFT opposes the restriction of municipalities’ ability to respond to local conditions and enact ordinances that align with established plans and goals. LD 2174 would disable municipalities from enacting more specific, tailored or stringent standards than state law to protect agricultural resources and production in their communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in opposition to LD 2174.