



Maine Potato Board

744 Main Street

Presque Isle, ME 04769

(207) 769-5061

FAX 764-4148

mainepotatoes.com

**Testimony of Jeannie M. Tapley, Executive Director,
Maine Potato Board to the Joint Standing Committee on Labor**

March 2, 2026

LD 2089: An Act to Amend the Law Governing Agricultural Labor Housing Standards

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor:

Please accept my submission today in opposition to LD 2089 on behalf of the Maine potato industry; my apologies for not being able to attend in person.

Seasonal workers are vital to our growers' operations, playing a critical role in planting and harvesting of their crops. Increasingly, a growing number of our farms are utilizing the federal H-2A program to address the ongoing challenges posed by the diminishing local workforce. Employers actively participating in the H-2A program are subject to a highly rigorous and comprehensive regulatory framework, with housing facilities for H-2A workers undergoing frequent and thorough inspections conducted by both federal and Maine state authorities. These inspections are based on consistently applied standards, thereby ensuring a level playing field for all Maine and US-based farmers.

Current Maine law aligns agricultural labor housing standards with federal requirements, providing clarity and predictability for employers; fostering a stable and easily navigable regulatory environment. However, LD 2089 would remove this alignment, granting the Department the authority to adopt standards that diverge from federal law. While I acknowledge the bill was brought forward due to uncertainty regarding potential changes to federal H-2A standards, I ask this committee exercise caution and refrain from taking any unnecessary actions that could further complicate the ability for our farmers to secure the labor necessary to harvest food for our communities, particularly before the nature and scope of any potential federal changes are fully understood and assessed.

While the stated intent of LD 2089 is not to establish stricter or differing standards, the removal of the federal conformity requirement inherently introduces the risk of creating dual or conflicting standards. This, in turn, could lead to considerable uncertainty and operational challenges for our growers, potentially disrupting their operations.

Furthermore, it is important to note that Maine potato farmers are already contending with a competitive disadvantage stemming from a combination of higher input costs and our geographic location. Allowing Maine to diverge from federal regulations in this area risks placing Maine farmers at an even greater competitive disadvantage compared to their counterparts in other potato-producing regions across the United States.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that you vote "ought not to pass" on LD 2089 and avoid adding unnecessary regulatory hurdles that could harm Maine farmers. Thank you for your time and consideration of my submission.