

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry:

My name is **Sam Ricker**. I operate **Ricker Hill Orchards in Turner** and **Apple Ridge Farms in Auburn**. I am the **Immediate Past President of the Maine Pomological Society** and **Vice President and a board member of the Agricultural Council of Maine**.

I'm writing in support of **LD 299** because Maine orchards and farms need **practical, near-term investment** to stay viable. Costs are up, weather damage is more frequent, margins are tight, and farmland is being lost because farms are forced to sell land to pay bills—while farmers cannot compete with house-lot pricing when trying to expand.

LD 299 should prioritize and fund:

- **The Maine Agriculture, Food and Forest Products Investment Fund** so farms can access **grants and low-interest revolving loans** for essential projects like storm-damage restoration, orchard system repairs, cold storage and handling upgrades, and efficiency improvements.
- **Water and drought resilience investments** (wells, ponds, pumps, and irrigation) that protect perennial crops and stabilize production.

Thank you for your time and for acting this session.

**Respectfully submitted,
Sam Ricker**

Ricker Hill Orchards — Turner, Maine

Apple Ridge Farms — Auburn, Maine

Immediate Past President, Maine Pomological Society

Vice President & Board Member, Agricultural Council of Maine

Samuel Ricker
Auburn
LD 299

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