



Testimony of David Kent  
in Opposition to LD 474  
An Act to Support Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry in Maine

Good Afternoon Sen. Talbot-Ross, Rep. Plucker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. My name is David Kent, I am the president of the Maine Farm Bureau. I am writing today to express our organization's support for LD 473.

Maine Farm Bureau is very concerned about the recent importation of seed potatoes into Maine from an area known to be infested with Columbia Root Knot Nematode (CRKN).

The Maine Farm Bureau represents farm families across the state who depend on strong biosecurity protections to safeguard Maine agriculture. Reports that seed potatoes were shipped from Colorado, an area with documented CRKN infestations in parts of the San Luis Valley, raise significant concerns about the potential risk to Maine's agricultural economy.

CRKN is a quarantinable pest recognized by the United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Maine regulations require that imported seed potatoes be produced in areas free of serious pests such as Golden Nematode, Columbia Root Knot Nematode, and potato wart. These regulations were established to prevent the introduction of damaging pests and diseases into Maine and to protect the long-term viability of our agricultural industries.

We understand that the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry has been made aware of this situation and that the seed potatoes have already arrived in Maine and are currently in the possession of the buyer. This situation is deeply concerning to farmers who rely on strict safeguards to protect their crops, land, and livelihoods.

If CRKN were to become established in Maine, the consequences could be severe. Maine's potato industry alone represents a significant part of the state's agricultural economy, and the introduction of this pest could result in substantial financial losses. In addition, CRKN affects a wide range of host plants including vegetables, grains, ornamental plants, and weeds, increasing the potential impact far beyond potatoes alone.

There is also concern that the perception of increased pest risk could affect trade relationships with other states and international markets. Even the possibility that Maine is accepting seed



potatoes from infested areas could lead trading partners to restrict imports from Maine farms in order to protect their own industries.

For these reasons, the Maine Farm Bureau respectfully urges the committee to vote in favor of the legislation before you. We ask the State of Maine to review this matter carefully and take all appropriate steps to ensure that Maine's existing plant health protections are upheld.

Protecting Maine agriculture from invasive pests and diseases is essential to preserving the strength and sustainability of our farming community.

Thank you for your continued work on behalf of Maine farmers and rural communities. We appreciate your attention to this important issue.