



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Good morning Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and fellow members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee. I am State Representative Tim Guerrette of Caribou, and I am proudly serving my first term in the Maine House representing the fine folks of Caribou, Wade, and Washburn in District 4. I am pleased to be here today to present LD 220, An Act to Support Maine's Potato Farmers and Processors.

As many of you may remember, Maine's potato industry was devastated this past March when fire destroyed the Penobscot McCrum potato processing facility in Belfast. Although investigators confirmed the cause of the fire was accidental and no one was hurt, nearly 140 workers woke up that morning to find out their place of employment was gone. The impact from that tragedy has been felt from the coast of Maine all the way back home in Washburn where the McCrum family started potato farming back in the 1800's.

Our Aroostook County delegation has been eager to help stabilize Maine's potato industry, not only from catastrophic events such as the Belfast fire, but also from other market and societal factors that have impacted the industry in recent years. That is why we submitted the bill before you today, LD 220, which is a concept draft bill that proposes to enact measures to support Maine's potato industry farmers and processors, including measures to respond to economic issues such as the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and inflation.

Since this bill was introduced, the Administration also announced its intention of helping Maine's potato industry. I am pleased to share with the Committee that the Department of Economic and Community Development has introduced a bill with a similar objective as this proposal. LD 150 affects the Pine Tree Development Zone program and the existing tax credit for major food processing and manufacturing facility expansions. That bill has my full endorsement.