

**Testimony of Donald E. Flannery, Executive Director, Maine Potato Board to the
Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee**

February 13, 2023

**LD 315 – An Act to Provide Funding for Drought Relief and Other Programs
Benefiting Maine Farmers**

Senator Ingwersen Representative Pluecker and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry; I am Donald Flannery, Executive Director of the Maine Potato Board (MPB) and here today to speak in favor of LD 315: An Act to Provide Funding for Drought Relief and Other Programs Benefiting Maine Farmers I would also like to thank Senator Ingwersen for submitting LD 315 in support of Maine farmers.

For over twenty years, the MPB has been involved in working to improve access to water for irrigation at the same time providing our growers with the resources to make sound and sustainable investments as it relates to irrigation infrastructure. We have worked closely with the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (MDACF) Water Management Board, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service to ensure all involved understand agricultures needs regarding irrigation. The MPB has committed financial resources to this effort in providing technical assistance to growers; we have an agricultural engineer on staff that develops water management plans, pond designs and layouts for irrigation systems. With our limited resources we can only provide these services to potato growers in Maine. The need for these same services exists across all sectors of agriculture in Maine therefore; LD 315 will help to provide technical assistance to Maine farmers that don't currently have access to the resources necessary to plan and implement irrigation systems to support their farming operations.

In January of 2023, the MDACF presented to the Committee a report: Finding and Recommendations for Streamline Permitting New Source of Water for Irrigation in Maine Pursuant to LD 1998. This report outlined the needs for technical and financial assistance to support the sound and sustainable development of irrigation for Maine farmers. LD 315 addresses two of the recommendations of this report; funding for

necessary changes to LUPC permit application and positions within LUPC, MDACF and DEP to support Maine farmers move forward to develop sustainable water sources and invest in irrigation to mitigate risk with a changing climate and help secure our food supply.

The positions created in LD 315 will provide technical assistance in all three departments; this assistance will be to help farms improve and develop sustainable water sources and implement sound irrigation practices. We believe this is a move in the right direction; state agencies become proactive on this important issue not reactive by having to undertake enforcement actions to solve issues that arise because the resources were not available to the farmer early on in the development of irrigation.

We encourage you to support LD 315 and give the MDACF, MDEP and LUPC the resources to help Maine farms. We look forward to our continued work on water source development and development of irrigation in Maine, and working with all these agencies to support Maine farmers. I am happy to take any questions and will be available for any work sessions.