

Jason Tessier, Dairy Farmer in Skowhegan
Regarding Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee
LD 258 Testimony
March 3rd, 2023

Thank You Chairs and Committee Members

My name is Jason Tessier, and My wife and I own a 30 head dairy farm in Skowhegan. All of our milk is processed on our farm and sold in the greater Skowhegan area, direct to consumers and through 8 other locally owned and operated stores. I am also on the Board of Maine Dairy Industry Association and serve as secretary for MDIA.

I would like to testify in support of the emergency funding bill LD258. The year 2022 has been very volatile and emotional for the dairy industry. We lost 20 dairy farms in 2022, and an additional 4 already in 2023, with the number remaining around 160. I am deeply afraid we are nearing the point where we will lose the critical mass necessary to maintain our infrastructure, and the other businesses who depend on the dairy industry.

January 2022 to January 2023 our Electric Bill Increased by 30%, while our usage actually decreased minimally. This was at a cost of \$305 per month to our farm. January of 2022 we were paying \$2.89 per gallon for diesel fuel, last week I paid \$4.84, and back during the harvest season, during our highest fuel consumption period, I was paying as high as \$5.85 a gallon. Our 2022 fuel costs were 100% increased over 2021. Although less quantifiable, we have seen a 30% to 50% increase in most parts, supplies and inputs, while the CPI was reporting under 10%. The increased price paid to farmers in 2022 were consumed by these increased costs, turning optimism to discouragement, as we watch our assets eroding and our hope for profitability become more and more distant.

Maine is still home to roughly 176 dairy farms that steward 700,000 acres of fields, pastures, and croplands, according to a June 2022 news release by Governor Mills, announcing June as Maine Dairy Month. Maine dairy farms act as engines for the state's economy and employment sectors, not only employing the farmers themselves but offering opportunities for indirect business and growth. Maine dairy farmers and creameries provide approximately 15,000 jobs both directly and indirectly, accounting for \$904 million in direct economic impact, and \$1 billion in indirect economic impact, according to the news release. I feel this industry is worth saving, I hope you all will agree.

Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jason Tessier".

Jason Tessier
Skowhegan