

Chair Ingwersen and Chair Pluecker and the distinguished members of the Committee On Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

My name is Shukri Abdirahman and I live in Lewiston Maine. I am a co-director of Maine Youth Power, a youth-led, youth movement throughout rural and suburban Maine fighting to win human dignity, equity and a livable future for all. I am here today to ask that you support Senator Hickman's bill LD 1274 An Act to Increase Land Access for Historically Disadvantaged Populations.

I come from a background of parents who farmed and dependent on their land and what they could grow. I believe all Mainers, especially Bipoc people should be able to farm freely and enjoy the beautiful land we have here in Maine to sustain. I believe Maine has a responsibility to grant land to Black farmers who live here today. There has been a long enough history of land dispossession coming from the history of slavery in our country. We must take this crucial step to enact a program to train and grant land to Black farmers to keep Maine the beautiful farming community and grow equitably.

I strongly support this bill because I believe this bill will allow us to somewhat correct an injustice done to black farmers and to grant them the same opportunity white farmers in Maine enjoy. People often talk about how there's not enough black people in Maine but we don't even grant land access to black farmers we have here already. It is up to us to correct our history and to allow black farmers the same privileges as white farmers. Maine is an incredible state to live in and we are fortunate to have land we can grow, sustain and cherish.

I believe this is an especially important bill and I urge the committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to pass this bill.