

Good Morning Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker and distinguished members of the committee. My name is Betsy Garrold, I live in Knox and I am President of Food for Maine's Future, a small but mighty non-profit organization working in the local food movement. I speak today in support of LD 1823 which I recommend be amended to include annual progress reports from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) regarding implementation of both the Food Sovereignty Act and the Right to Food Constitutional Amendment.

I am going to tell you a few things you already know, point out some things you may not be aware of, and ask some questions. Hoping to stir thoughts regarding how things actually stand on the ground.

In 2017 the Legislature passed into law the Maine Food Sovereignty Act and in 2021 the people of Maine voted to amend their constitution to include the Right to Food. I want those two dates to stick in your minds as I show you two things. The first is the front page of the DHHS "State of Maine Food Code" notice the date: 2013. This predates the passage of the Food Sovereignty Act and the Right to Food Amendment. The second is the PDF of the "Home Food Licensing 101" fact sheet from the DACF.

Neither of these documents refer to the Food Sovereignty Act or the Right to Food Amendment. Obviously the DHHS document predates these new laws and constitutional rights. Why the DACF document does not mention them is difficult to ascertain. I do give them credit for mentioning the 1000 bird exemption statute that passed, I believe, in 2010.

Its been awhile since I sat in High School Civics but my understanding is that not a lot had changed in 50 years. Our government consists of three branches. Legislative, Executive and Judicial. When the Legislature enacts a statute it is the job of the departments in the Executive branch to write rules and regulations and enforce them. It is not their job to decide which bits and pieces they should regulate, or what rules they should enforce.

One of the most vital jobs of the departments in the Executive branch is to educate the public about these rules and regulations and how they will be enforced. In this age of the internet the webpages of these departments are the first place citizens go to understand what they need to be aware of in order to do such things as run a food business. When folks go to these websites all of the current statues should be reflected there. On neither the DHHS nor the DACF website could I find any mention of the Food Sovereignty Act, passed 6 years ago, or the Right to Food Amendment, passed 2 years ago. I stopped counting the number of broken links on these websites because there were so many.

So here are my two questions, one is rhetorical and the other is just a matter of curiosity. Why don't these portals for the education of the citizens correctly reflect the current statutes as enacted by the Legislature and the people of Maine? And why are there two departments involved in the licensing and inspection of food establishments in this state?

In closing I ask the committee to vote LD 1823 out "ought to pass" with the addition of the annual reporting requirement from both departments, ask that the committee review the information being promoted by these two departments regarding our local food systems, and thank the committee for their time.

I will take any questions.