

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, my name is Jesse Watson, I am a resident of Rockland and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1823. I founded Midcoast Permaculture Design (midcoastpermaculture.com) in 2009 which provides design and planning services to homesteaders, farmers and land managers seeking to steward edible ecosystems using sustainable and regenerative methods. I co-founded the Maine Ecological Design School (mameecologicaldesign.org) in 2020 to help reconnect people to the landscapes immediately around them in profound new ways and to teach them how to plan and design a landscape and lifeway that results in the kind of world we want to build for the grandchildren.

Permaculture is a design philosophy that emphasizes mimicry of patterns in nature with a focus on edible ecosystems and resilient human ecologies. The design process is based on the science of agroecology, the practices of agroforestry, and is inspired by traditional practices and people. Practices and techniques associated with permaculture come from all over the world and throughout history. Lifestyle, worldview and cultural components emphasize responsibility for earth care, people care, fair share and awareness of limits.

I'm here to voice support for this bill because I support the implementation of the Right to Food amendment to the constitution that we passed last year. My understanding is that this bill helps to align the machinery and agencies of government with the spirit and intent of the RtF amendment. I'm just a layperson and my understanding is that the RtF amendment is like the foundation of a house and bills like this are the walls providing framing for that house.

Tree, shrub and perennial food crops are more resilient to climate change than annual crops dependent on soil tillage. They also lend themselves to marginal and sloping land. Pairing tree and shrub crops with a philosophy of water catchments throughout a watershed can lead us toward food-producing solutions to challenges of both heavy rainfall and drought. Imagine fruit, nut and spice parks filled with food sources that support habitat for wildlife and human people.

It makes me glad to see policy support for edible landscaping on publicly owned land to support food security. Maine is still a net importer of most of its food, and while we have grown used to importing food from California and elsewhere that is a genuine security concern given the reality of climate change and the desertification of the west. Maine needs to support food producing skills and food production across the landscape to address this food security liability. We may experience tension and growing pains during this transition back to a local food economy, but it is work that we must embrace on behalf of the grandchildren. Please vote ought to pass. Thank you.