

# Valley View Farm

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Testimony for LD 2053, an act to exempt buildings used to cultivate crops from the Maine Uniform Building Code

January 21, 2024

Honorable Senator Beebe-Center, Honorable Representative Salisbury and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Kathy Shaw, I am a farmer and serve as House Representative for District 88 in Auburn.

Over the past 10 years I have worked with Eric Cousins of the City of Auburn Planning Department on various issues around agriculture and the means available to allow our residents to grow their own food and become more self-sufficient. We are introducing and asking for your support and consideration of LD2053 which will expand the ability of people to use affordable, plastic structures like hoop houses, low tunnels and other seasonal structures that can significantly increase productivity but do not meet the structural and load requirements of the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code.

This exemption as proposed would not exempt structures used for the cultivation of cannabis and would not preempt the ability of a town to apply local land use standards or restrictions.

There are 107 cities and towns in Maine with populations of over 4,000 that must comply with MUBEC requirements, many of those municipalities (Auburn among them) has large rural areas and must enforce the MUBEC standards. By changing the language in a very small way, we will allow more of our citizens to grow their own foods, become a bit more self-sufficient and to do so in a

manner that will not break the bank in building such structures. Many interested folks contact their planning department in the warmer months to explore the opportunity to build such hoop houses and become disappointed when they are faced with significant cost and permitting. .

A state wide MUBEC exemption already exists for the housing of livestock or the storage of harvested crops and LD 2053 will fix this, allowing for the use of greenhouses, and other similar structures for growing crops.

Again, this will NOT exempt structures for growing cannabis.

As we all work towards making healthy locally grown food available for more and all Maine people, adding this easy and simple exemption will create more opportunity for our residents by adding flexibility to construct greenhouses and hoophouses on their properties where it is currently not permitted .

I thank you for your time and attention today and will gladly answer any questions .

Sincerely

Kathy Shaw