



Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, & Forestry  
% Legislative Information Office  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

January 17, 2023

**RE: LD 579, An Act to Support Farmland Conservation and Transition Planning for Farmers**

Dear Sen. Ingwersen, Rep. Pluecker, and Members of the ACF Committee:

My name is Francesca “Ches” Gundrum and I am Maine Audubon’s Policy Advocate. Maine Audubon fulfills our mission to conserve Maine’s wildlife and wildlife habitat by engaging people of all ages in nature through a science-based approach to education, conservation, and advocacy. On behalf of Maine Audubon and our 30,000 members, supporters, and volunteers, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 579, *An Act to Support Farmland Conservation and Transition Planning for Farmers*.

Thoughtful efforts to advance farmland protection in Maine are good for people and – *with the right guidance* – good for wildlife. Strengthening existing state programs created to provide needed protection to working farmland properties is critical to helping ensure that we have the land base needed to grow our agricultural economy, strengthen food security, and build resilience to climate change for our state and communities. Currently, less than 5 percent of Maine’s farmland is protected, which is lower than most states in the Northeast, and is the lowest amount by far of any other state in New England. Development pressure and funding constraints are the primary drivers of this issue – this bill will help address this statewide problem by strengthening existing state farmland protection programs. LD 579 represents an opportunity to help support Maine’s farmers and the communities who rely on the food they produce. Dedicating resources to help conserve farmland will help enhance our ability to grow food in our state long into the future and reduce the carbon pollution associated with trucking food all across the country.

Additionally, with the proper technical guidance, protecting these agricultural landscapes can help us maintain crucial ecosystems that support a variety of wildlife species. Climate change is the most significant threat to Maine’s wildlife and habitat. The conservation of farmland in Maine not only helps to mitigate the impacts of climate change but with the right guidance, can help foster resilience in ecosystems, helping wildlife populations adapt to shifting environmental conditions.

To help protect Maine's farmers and communities – human and wildlife – we urge this committee to support LD 579. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Francesca Gundrum". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Francesca "Ches" Gundrum | Policy Advocate