



Stacy Brenner  
Senator, District 30

THE MAINE SENATE  
131st Legislature

3 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

**Testimony of Senator Stacy Brenner to introduce LD 579, “An Act to Support Farmland Conservation”  
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry  
January 17, 2024**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pleuker and Esteemed members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee, I am Senator Stacy Brenner. I represent Senate District 30 which includes Gorham and most of Scarborough. I am also a farmer.

Today, I am here to introduce LD 579 , “An Act to Support Farmland Conservation”.

In a nutshell, this bill provides an elegant pathway to further the work laid out in the 130th legislature with the development of the Maine Working Farmland Access and Protection Program by Representative Pleuker and this committee.

It sets up an account to help administer the work and it provides funding for a position within the department to carry out the efforts.

For some perspective, only 3.6% of Maine’s remaining farmland is permanently protected from development. In comparison, Rhode Island and Massachusetts have protected 25% of their states’ remaining farmland, with Vermont, Connecticut and New Hampshire each between 15% and 20%.

The intent here is to make an incremental adjustment to the Working Farmland Access and Protection Program, build the Department’s capacity to promulgate rulemaking and support the administration of the program going forward.

As a state, we have grand goals: to continue to build our agricultural economy, to feed the people of Maine with Maine produced food, and to realize a future for farmers and farmworkers where we can all thrive. Farmland protection and access are the first steps to building new farm businesses and expanding thriving businesses.

Thank you all for taking the time today to consider this proposal. There are folks from the DACF as well as advocates here who can all speak to the need to accelerate the state’s farmland protection work and the merits of this discrete proposal to support the work. I’d be happy to try and answer any questions and I appreciate all you do on the committee to support the work of farmers.