

I want to thank, Senator Ingwersen and Representative Pluecker and members of the Agriculture Conservation and Forestry Committee, for being here today and hearing my testimony

My name is Alyssa Michaud and my husband and I own a family dairy farm in China, Maine. We milk around 220 cows and would be recognized as a farm that fits under tier 2. We are a farm that has essentially been saved by the tier program.

I *can* imagine that in your position it is essentially impossible to make everyone happy but that isn't the case with LD2188, this bill has the most complete backing of all size and type of Dairy farms.

First, I want to congratulate you and give you a round of applause for previously instituting such a successful program.

(applaud)

With a couple of updates and the renewal of this bill, you will continue to save my family farm, countless other farms and the businesses we support.

This is my first time speaking before a legislative committee and I'm here instead of on the farm because of the unequivocal importance that renewing this bill holds for Maine's future, our business, and our family

We have the pleasure of raising 3 kiddos on our farm and whether or not they choose to farm in the future, the work ethic and skills the farm has instilled in my children will translate into Maine gaining three adaptable, productive members that we will be proud to have in the future workforce.

Almost every Mainer used to be connected to a farm in some way, whether it was their grandfather or their uncle but the disconnect or distance has placed a burden on the dairy industry to explain their importance to the local and state economy, instead of it being the well known fact, I hope to give you some insight on the multifaceted way updating and renewing this bill will have on a larger scale.

Beyond the iconic, nostalgic image you'll find that farms are the quiet powerhouse that fuels commerce throughout our local businesses and the state's economy. There's a well known saying that for every dollar that comes into a farm, more than that goes right back out.

I could share so many personal and emotional sentiments about the value of farms but I'd really like to delve into the impact our revenue has on the local and state economies. I have quotes from 3 of the 76 local businesses my farm directly supports. (That's how many I could name when I wrote this yesterday)

Quotes from

Christine Spaulding of Spaulding Sales and Service, Albion Maine says

"I see a huge trickle down effect because 35-40% of our business comes in from local farms. If we didn't have farms doing business with us we would be shut down right now. I know when it's not good for farms because we see it across all our accounts and nobody can come in to do any business. "

Jesse Haskell of MA Haskell & Sons trucking and Haskell Farm says

Haskell Farm is a 4th generation Farm that relies on the tier program to continue. MA Haskell & Sons trucking relies on all the organic dairies in Maine for the primary source of revenue for its trucking business as well. With 15 employees between these 2 businesses, the tier program is what keeps these businesses alive."

Bryanne Ferris of Lakeview Lumber, China

" We have a ton of local farms that do a lot of business with us. When they have money we see a huge increase in lumber sales and metal roofing. It seems like when the farms are healthy they are starting another building project with us "

In short, I don't necessarily think of this bill as just supporting Local Farms, which it does, but it supports the health of the greater community more. The sad fact that we are forced to look at... is Once a farm is lost or goes under... we won't see another one come back and the numbers will continue to dwindle... as dire as that sounds, it's the cold truth.

I can't simplify or offer to explain the extremely complex milk market but I'm sure you're wondering why this support is so critical at the state level. There has always been a pendulum swinging, the difference now is the length of time the pendulum swings to unsustainable figures, we are now talking years and not months, we can't recover or catch back up when the market turns to producing at cost for a few months, compared to the year or year and a half we just survived at far below cost.

The updated figures before you are showing you what it costs to produce the essential product that feeds our local people. Understanding the milk market would require many degrees and 40 years in the business and honestly.... Then you still wouldn't be able to convey or explain the many variables and incongruities that impact the milk price. Maine has been on the forefront of recognizing the importance of saving and supporting dairy farms particularly through the tier program. We have seen the loss of farms throughout New England at a much higher rate than Maine due solely to the tier program being in place. In saying this, the actual cost of production has exploded in the last two years while the price of milk has been flat for basically 40 years. It's not a lack of efficiency that is hurting our businesses as we have maximized and streamlined all aspects on the farm. If you look back at prices 40 years ago we saw

Gallon of Gas \$1.10

Dozen eggs \$1.00

Minimum wage \$3.35

Gallon of Milk \$3.98

Now, I know if you fuel up your vehicle or do any grocery shopping you know the difference in today's numbers.

By renewing LD2188, we are asking to remain the vehicle that disperses needed commerce throughout our local and state economies.

You have a decision in front of you to make the single greatest impact in keeping Maine's economy flourishing and local businesses operating

The tier program is the most comprehensive way to support all size farms which is essential for the entire community and food chain.

I am asking for you to renew LD2188 and recognize the adjustments in the cost of production study.

Thank you for your time today. I would be happy to talk further with anyone that has more questions. Thank you