



**Testimony by William Norbert
Governmental Affairs and Communications Manager**

In Support of L.D. 2214

An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025

**Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry**

March 4, 2024

Senators Rotundo and Ingwersen, Representatives Sachs and Pluecker, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry:

My name is Bill Norbert. I am the Governmental Affairs and Communications Manager at the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME) and present this testimony in support of the Governor's proposed initiative set forth in Part A of L.D. 2214 related to the **Dairy Improvement Fund**, which is found on **Page A-51** of your materials. FAME administers this fund on behalf of the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry.

The program is funded with Other Special Revenues, namely casino revenues. As a result of revenue changes approved in the December 2023 Revenue Forecast, this initiative proposes adjusting program funding downward slightly by \$6,930 in FY 23-24 and by \$3,130 in FY 24-25. We understand and support these modest adjustments. They will have minimal impact on operation of the fund and program.

The Dairy Improvement Fund Program was created in 2011 by the Maine Legislature to help farms and dairy enterprises fund capital improvements to maintain and enhance the viability of their operations. Generally, any business or individual located in Maine and identified by the Department as engaged in commercial production of cow milk or cow milk products is eligible. Eligible uses include design, construction or improvement of milking parlors, dairy cattle housing, silos, grain bins, feed sheds, or the construction or renovation of buildings, or equipment, located in Maine and used in connection with a dairy enterprise. The program offers a 1% fixed interest rate on loans up to \$250,000.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.