

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEES OF APPROPRIATIONS AND
FINANCIAL AFFAIRS AND THE AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY

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

March 4th, 2024

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Senator Ingwerson, Representative Pluecker and honorable members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs, and the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committees,

My name is Carmen Fisher. I represent Fisher Farms, a 60 cow dairy farm in Sabattus. You may have seen us, we create a scenic picture you can see right on I-95 at mile marker 87.

First and foremost, I would like to thank you for the support Maine has provided for its dairy industry. It has provided it's dairy farmers a support system not seen anywhere else in New England.

I do not stand in front of you as the owner of a dairy operation, I am here today to represent the future. I am a fifth generation farmer, currently raising the 6th generation. I have a 9 year old son who is passionate about farming, there is no doubt in his mind that he will be a farmer also.

Dairy farmers have a large and positive economic impact for Maine, a 3.06 billion dollar total economical impact in fact. Maine dairy farmers alone contributed 155 million in Maine state tax contributions. We provide jobs and support the local businesses around us. We raise children who are hard working and resilient individuals with many skills in the trades. They become productive members of society.

There is no doubt dairy farming in Maine can be difficult. I was raised in a small town that had 5 dairy farms when I was growing up, now we are the last ones standing.

Maine dairy farmers are often limited in available resources and it is costly to obtain them due to our geographic location. We battle erratic weather, higher costs of production than much of the country, and shrinking amounts of available farmland. As the outlook has become bleaker, we are told to become more efficient and yet we produce more milk per cow than ever before on the tightest margins many of us have seen. We are told to diversify, but that requires cash flow that many of us no longer have or a land base that many have no access to. The answer shouldn't be for us to work even harder. We deserve to do more than survive, we deserve to thrive.

Despite all odds, every one of us goes to bed each night believing in a better tomorrow. We wake up seven days a week and head to the barn because we believe in what we do. Food

doesn't grow on shelves, passionate farmers produce it. You will notice I introduced myself by what generation I am, that is how farmers speak of their identity. I want this to be my future, and I want this to be an option for my children's future. The state of Maine has helped to support my family's legacy, and we would greatly appreciate your continued support of our dairy industry.

Thank you for your time.