

Lakeview Farm, LLC

Location of family farm: Columbia, Maine

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and esteemed members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. The following is my testimony in Support of LD 2256 An Act to Provide Emergency One-Time Relief from the Wild Blueberry Tax for Growers in Maine. My brother (Mark Cotton), two sisters (Bonnie "Cotton" Prall, and Janice 'Cotton' Zwart), along with myself (Katie 'Cotton' Gillen) own, operate, and manage Lakeview Farm LLC. Our father (Stanley Cotton, who was born in Columbia, Maine) purchased the land in 1944.

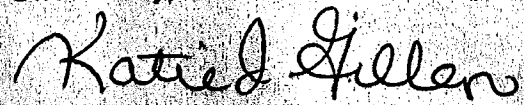
Our farm is located out on the blueberry barrens around Schoodic Lake. Our family has farmed it for many many years. Our father passed away in 1976, then our mother took over. In 2005, our mother set up an LLC, hence Lakeview Farm LLC began.

Blueberry farming has been important to our family (and respective families) our whole lives. All of us over the years have picked, raked, winnowed, and harvested blueberries. My brother has farmed full time for years, along with his family, and others that are hired to work it. We have relied on income from the farm for a number of years. In recent years, there have been increased costs such as fertilizer, fuel, labor, irrigation, along with significantly lower prices to growers for our blueberries.

I respectfully ask you to please vote to pass LD 2256. This bill will really help ALL blueberry growers.

I thank the Committee members for their consideration.

Sincerely,



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