



# MAINE FARMLAND TRUST

**Testimony of Shelley Megquier, Policy & Research Director, Maine Farmland Trust, to the 132<sup>nd</sup>  
Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry  
February 6, 2025**

Good morning Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. My name is Shelley Megquier and I am the Policy & Research Director at Maine Farmland Trust (MFT). I am providing testimony on behalf of MFT in support of LD 130 – *An Act to Establish the PFAS Response Program and to Modify the Fund to Address PFAS Contamination*.

MFT is a member-powered statewide organization that works to protect farmland, support farmers, and advance the future of farming. Our goals are to keep agricultural lands working and help farmers and their communities thrive. Since our founding in 1999, MFT has helped to permanently protect farmland in every county in Maine, amounting to nearly 57,000 acres across 345 farms. Our Farm Network includes more than 550 farms that have participated in MFT's programming either through an agricultural easement or through one of our programs. Our main program areas are Farmland Protection, Farmland Access, Stewardship, Farm Business Planning, PFAS Support, Climate Resilience, and Policy and Research.

For the past several years, MFT has been deeply engaged in the strong and collaborative response to the challenge of PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) contamination on Maine farms and farmland. The presence of PFAS in soil, water, crops and livestock is an emerging national issue, and PFAS contamination in Maine continues to require a robust, coordinated response so we are adequately supporting impacted farmers. To support immediate farmer's needs in the face of PFAS contamination, MFT and MOFGA jointly established an Emergency Relief Fund, which continues to operate. MFT offers resources and hands-on technical assistance to help farmers mitigate contamination and pivot their businesses, and partners with farmers on protected farms to navigate the terms of their easements with as much flexibility as possible. MFT has also advocated in partnership with impacted farmers and other organizations for a state policy response to ensure that impacted farmers receive the support they need – helping to establish the PFAS Fund in 2022 that this bill seeks to reinforce.

State agencies have been working tirelessly to address the PFAS issue from a variety of different angles and DACF's PFAS Response Program has been a critical part of that response since it was created. LD 130 is necessary to ensure there is adequate statutory authority so DACF can continue to operate the PFAS Response Program in real time. As Program implementation continues, they will need the ability to create routine technical rules and other frameworks to ensure Maine's PFAS response remains comprehensive, informed by the needs of impacted farmers, and scientifically sound. LD 130 also makes some necessary housekeeping updates – for example, stipulating that health care information be treated as confidential, that new chairs of the advisory committee can be selected from among its members for a term of 2 years, and switching the number of required public meetings per year to one rather than remaining at two per year. These changes are reasonable, in our opinion, and aligned with the original intent of the program when it was created.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 130. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.