

Maine Dairy Industry Association  
PO Box 5013 | 337 State Street  
Augusta, ME 04430



Annie Watson, President  
Dale Cole, Vice President  
Jason Tessier, Secretary  
Heath Miller, Treasurer  
Dick Perkins, At Large

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,  
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY**

**in support of**

***“LD311 An Act to Improve Efficiency of Meat and Poultry Processing***

***Facilities by Requiring the Designation of State Inspectors as Essential”***

Good morning Senator Talbot-Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of Joint Standing Committee On Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, my name is Annie Watson. I am a dairy farmer from Whitefield and represent the Maine Dairy Industry Association (MDIA.)

MDIA represents the 138 cow-dairy farms in the state shipping milk. Our farms are located in 15 of Maine’s 16 counties. MDIA represents all of Maine’s dairies, no matter the size or style of operation. It is on behalf of these farms that we would like to submit this testimony in support of LD311.

Our dairy farms are best known for the delicious and nutritious milk we produce, but our Maine dairy farms are also beef producers. Beef is a part of our herds’ life cycle, and for many, selling beef can be an additional stream of revenue for our farm families.

Currently, Federal Food Safety Inspection Service workers are considered essential workers. Any slaughterhouses inspected by these workers are not required to shut down for state holidays or during emergency declarations due to lack of inspectors. This puts those slaughterhouses not serviced by the Federal Program at a disadvantage. It is our belief that the State Program should mirror the Federal Program, in order to best support the needs of our food producers. These inspectors, both at the state and federal level are an integral component of our food safety, and a robust State Inspection Program would recognize their importance by designating inspectors as essential.

Food production doesn’t take a day off, and while unforeseen delays to schedules are a part of life, it can be much more difficult to be flexible when dealing with animals, especially large animals.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and please reach out with any questions.