



Testimony of Garrett Mason
In Support of LD 311

An Act to Improve Efficiency of Meat and Poultry Processing Facilities by Requiring the
Designation of State Inspectors as Essential

Good Morning Sen. Talbot-Ross, Rep. Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. My name is Garrett Mason. I am a resident of Lisbon Falls, and am a Partner at Dirigo Public Affairs. I am here today representing our client, the Maine Farm Bureau. We are speaking today in support of LD 311.

The Maine Farm Bureau advocates for policies that promote the viability and sustainability of our agricultural economy. LD 311 as indicated by the agricultural industry, its bipartisan cosponsorship, and the emergency preamble, is clearly a necessary and timely measure to support Maine's livestock producers, meat processors, and rural communities.

One of the most pressing challenges facing our livestock farmers is the bottleneck in meat and poultry processing. With a limited number of USDA and state-inspected facilities, farmers often face long wait times for slaughter and processing services. This issue was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed vulnerabilities in our supply chain and highlighted the urgent need for more reliable and consistent processing capacity within our state.

By designating state meat and poultry inspectors as essential, LD 311 ensures that processing facilities can continue operations without unnecessary delays. This designation would allow inspections to continue on state holidays and beyond normal work shifts when necessary, provided that the processing establishments cover overtime costs. The bill strikes an important balance between maintaining essential government functions while ensuring that taxpayers do not bear additional financial burden.

Furthermore, this bill supports Maine's broader goals of strengthening our local food system. Consumer demand for locally raised meat is growing, as more Mainers seek out sustainable, high-quality food produced within our state. Without the processing infrastructure to meet this demand, Maine farmers are at a disadvantage. Keeping our processing facilities running efficiently benefits not only farmers but also consumers, small businesses, and rural economies.

On behalf of the Maine Farm Bureau and our Legislative Committee we would ask you to vote ought to pass on this legislation.