



Senator Talbot Ross
Representative Pluecker
Members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

RE: Opposition of LD 356 – An Act to Require Notification of Certain Outdoor Pesticide Applications

My name is Eric Venturini and I'm the Executive Director of the Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine testifying in opposition to this bill as it applies to agriculture.

The Wild Blueberry Commission (WBCM) works on behalf of Maine's 512¹ farms who grow wild blueberries on 47,600¹ acres across the State. In 2024, Maine produced approximately 85 million pounds of wild blueberries representing nearly 100% of all *wild* blueberries and approximately 10% of all *blueberries* grown in the US. Our industry contributes \$361 million dollars to the state's economy annually² and is the only state with significant commercial production of wild blueberries.

Maine's wild blueberry industry works hand in hand with the University of Maine to sustainably manage pests and disease using Integrated Pest and Pollinator Management (IPPM). One of the most basic premises of IPPM is to monitor your pest populations. As an example, there is one particularly nasty pest, a fly called the Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD) that producers monitor using cup traps baited with a yeast mixture. The fly flies in, gets trapped, and the producer can come around every few days and count how many flies are in the trap. University of Maine research tells us that if you count 1 fly for every three traps you have a 99% chance of being ok the following week but if you get to 16 flies per 3 cups you have a 50:50 chance. This example raises some questions.

What would happen if you reached your risk threshold for flies per trap, notified your neighbor of your intent, waited a week, and then treated? You would very likely lose your crop. This is an example of why the originally proposed 7-day notification language will not work with today's IPPM practices and why we are generally opposed to notification bills.

Let's consider the amendment to "review and amend rules on the placement of pesticidal baits... including... rodenticidal baits." Are the baited cup traps themselves considered pesticidal bait if the trap contains a pesticide to kill the pest that flies into it? Would producers have to notify their abutters?

Modern agriculture employs a number of low-impact, more sustainable, targeted tools. About two years ago, I watched a research presentation on a push-pull strategy to control SWD. This involved the use of a putty-like material that was placed in one area to draw the pests. In another part of the field a similar material repelled the pest. This is an example of existing products that do not fit neatly into our preconceived notions of pesticide. Are these pesticidal baits? Would they require notification?

I respectfully ask the Committee to amend the amendment and give the Board of Pesticides Control (BPC) more specific instructions, minimizing the risk of unintended consequences. I suggest limiting the scope of this resolve to include only residential properties.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to provide this testimony.

¹ USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service. 2022. Berries: 2022. United States Census of Agriculture.

² Camoine Associates. Unpublished Data. Economic and Fiscal Impacts of the Maine Wild Blueberry Industry. Wild Blueberry Association of North America – US, October 2023.