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Animals™**



**Testimony in Limited Opposition of LD 124
An Act to Protect the Right to Food
Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
March 11, 2025**

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

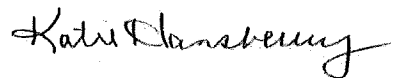
My name is Katie Hansberry and I am the Maine State Director of Humane World for Animals (formerly called the Humane Society of the United States) and current president of Maine Humane whose board includes representatives from the Animal Refuge League of Greater Portland in Westbrook, Animal Welfare Society in Kennebunk, Bangor Humane Society in Bangor, Catahoula Rescue of New England, Greater Androscoggin Humane Society in Lewiston, Maine State Society for the Protection of Animals in Windham, Meow Lounge in Westbrook, Midcoast Humane in Brunswick and Lincoln, Pope Memorial Humane Society in Thomaston, and Spirits Place in St. Albans, and animal control.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony about portions of LD 124 due to concerns about possible unintended consequences which would be detrimental to animals raised for food. These concerns stem from the definitions of “food sovereignty” and “traditional foodways” on page 2 of the bill. While there are references to processes being “ecologically sound” and “sustainable” a consideration for animal welfare is lacking. We do not think it is the intent of this proposal to allow food producers to be exempt from animal welfare and cruelty laws, but as currently written that could likely be the case as the current list of limitations in the constitutional amendment fails to include any reference to such laws as it reads “as long as an individual does not commit trespassing, theft, poaching or other abuses of private property rights, public lands or natural resources in the harvesting, production or acquisition of food.”

While the adoption of the right to food constitutional amendment did not immediately invalidate existing laws or prevent their enforcement, it is important to consider and anticipate the types of challenges that may result and do our best to assess what the outcome in the courts may likely be and determine if those outcomes are consistent with the intent of the proposed constitutional amendment. The case challenging the constitutionality of Maine’s long standing Sunday hunting prohibition provides such an example.

Unfortunately, Maine has seen neglect and cruelty cases involving animals raised for food and the right to food amendment would provide a defense that they have a constitutional right to “raise” those animals as the food “of their own choosing,” a right that is not subject to being limited by animal welfare or cruelty laws. Accordingly, amending LD 124 as suggested provides an opportunity to make clear this is not the case.

For the above stated reasons, we ask you consider amending the bill language to address these important issues. Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Katie Hansberry".

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