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

IN SUPPORT OF LD 932

An Act to Require the Issuance of Maine Agricultural Fair Licenses Every 4 Years

March 13, 2025

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, my name is Kayla Jones. I am an Agricultural Promotional Coordinator in the Agricultural Resource Development Division (ARD) within the Bureau of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources. I am speaking on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) in support of LD 932, "*An Act to Require the Issuance of Maine Agricultural Fair Licenses Every 4 Years.*"

7 MRSA §84, sub-§1 directs the DACF Commissioner to license agricultural fairs and set the dates for those fairs in three-year increments. LD 932 would change that increment to four years. The bill makes no other changes to the laws governing agricultural fairs.

The rationale behind this bill is simple. Maine Agricultural Fairs are the venue for about thirty percent of the harness racing that happens in the state. The Maine Harness Racing Commission typically issues race dates in two-year cycles; the Department issues fair dates in three-year cycles. This leads to a situation in which every few years, the Harness Racing Commission must hold hearings to realign race dates with fair dates, or the Department must hold hearings to realign fair dates with race dates, or both. Many factors can influence when fair organizers would prefer to hold their fairs, so some number of date change hearings are to be expected. The status quo, however, makes date change hearings an inevitable feature of the system.

Amending current law to allow fair licensure to sync with harness racing licensure will let both ARD and the Harness Racing Commission handle licenses for Maine's seven pari-mutuel fairs more efficiently. The change will also allow fair operations staff, exhibitors, and those involved in tourism and fair promotions to enter contracts and make decisions based on a longer timeframe.

Thank you for your time. I would happily answer any questions now or at the work session.

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