

Testimony in Support of LD 942
"An Act to Safeguard Sustainable Food Sources Provided by Certain Maine Farmers"



My name is Heather from Outland Farm, and I strongly support LD 942. As a small livestock farmer in Maine, I can personally attest to the challenges we face in an agricultural landscape that often favors large-scale operations.

Our small and mid-sized farms are vital contributors to Maine's food security and rural economy. We create jobs, steward the land, and provide high-quality, locally-produced food to our communities. However, we struggle with limited processing capacity, difficulty accessing capital, and navigating complex grant applications that aren't designed with operations our size in mind.

The provisions in this bill addressing three critical needs would make a significant difference:

First, prioritizing small and mid-sized farms for federal livestock grants would help level the playing field, allowing farms like mine to access much-needed resources that currently tend to flow toward larger operations.

Second, clearer state grant requirements and an inclusive stakeholder process would make funding opportunities more accessible. Too often, we lack the administrative capacity to compete effectively for grants against larger entities with dedicated grant writers.

Third, the shared-use kitchen infrastructure would be transformative. Currently, many of us lack adequate processing facilities to add value to our products. A shared-use kitchen would allow us to create value-added products, reduce waste, extend our selling season, and better serve local demand.

I particularly appreciate that this bill requires the Department to include farmers like me in developing the evaluation process. Our practical experience will ensure the resulting rules reflect the real-world needs of Maine's agricultural community.

Maine's agricultural future depends on maintaining diverse farm sizes and types. This legislation represents a timely investment in the resilience of our local food system, especially as we approach the deadline for the federal farm bill renewal.

I urge you to support LD 942. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Heather Holland".

Heather Holland, Outland Farm