

Maine Dairy Industry Association
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Annie Watson, President
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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON Health Coverage,
Insurance and Financial Services**

in support of

LD 893 "An Act to Exempt Nonprofit Agricultural Membership"

Good afternoon Senator Bailey , Representative Gramlich, and members of Joint Standing Committee Health coverage, Insurance and Financial services , my name is Heath Miller and I, along with Annie Watson represent Maine Dairy Industry Association. (MDIA)

MDIA represents the 138 cow-dairy farms in our state shipping milk. Our farms are located in 15 of Maine's 16 counties. MDIA represents all of Maine's dairies, no matter the size or style of operation. It is on behalf of these farms that we would like to submit this testimony in support of LD 893.

As many of you know, the dairy industry in Maine struggles to compete with other regions in the US, including here in New England. Over the last several years our cost of production has been much higher than revenue received. Our farm family struggles year after year to plant and harvest our crops, milk and care for our cows. This is all done while many times not considering our own health and wellness. Many of our farm owners will go without basic health care coverage to allow what little money is left to go towards keeping our livestock healthy and employees compensated. . LD 893 will give additional options for our farm families to possibly afford healthcare coverage.

I've read some testimony presented in the previous legislative sessions and I do understand the concerns presented. I've seen with my own eyes older farmers that cant or wont afford health coverage who could benefit from this coverage. This isn't about a farmer switching to this coverage, this about a farmer having coverage maybe for the very first time. This is about a farmer being able to monitor their health before it's too late.

Our farms operate under many different business structures and I urge you to consider this as you work through this bill. We want to make sure every farmer gets to participate regardless of how they structure their family business or file taxes.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and please reach out with any questions.