



### **Testimony in Support of LD 896**

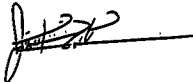
My name is Jonathan Tibbetts's and I am a farmer in York County Maine. I own a diversified farm with cattle, sheep, and retail greenhouses. I employ 3 full time year round employees, plus many part time seasonal employees depending on the time of year. One of my priorities is to ensuring the long-term success of both my farm and my employees. However, in an industry with short growing seasons and rising costs for essential supplies, it's becoming increasingly difficult to offer competitive benefits—especially when it comes to health insurance.

The cost of acquiring coverage for my employees is prohibitively high. Many of my employees have had to find health insurance through their spouse, or forgo health insurance altogether, which is a risk that nobody should have to take. This bill, LD 896, offers a solution. It would allow us to partner with the Tennessee Farm Bureau, providing affordable, reliable health coverage that has been helping farmers for 75 years.

This option would give farm employers and their families the peace of mind they deserve, and enable my employees to focus on their work without the constant worry of medical bills. Currently, when we are hiring we are already at a deficit because we cannot offer insurance (even though we are offering competitive pay) to our employees - by making health coverage accessible, LD 896 helps me offer insurance to employees, allowing me to hire and retain employees, who are essential to the continued success of my farm and other farms like me, here in Maine.

I strongly support this bill and urge the committee to pass it. It's a step toward creating a more sustainable and supportive environment for Maine's farmers and their hardworking employees who help keep this shrinking industry running.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jonathan Tibbetts ... 

Tibbetts Farm

Lyman Maine