



JANET T. MILLS  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY  
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER  
22 STATE HOUSE STATION  
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333

AMANDA E. BEAL  
COMMISSIONER

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,  
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY

NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST LD 1141

*An Act to Increase the Procurement of Maine Foods by State-funded Institutions*

April 1, 2025

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, I am Michelle Webb, Director of Agricultural Resource Development at the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF). I am here today to speak as Neither for Nor Against LD 1141, "*An Act to Increase the Procurement of Maine Foods by State-funded Institutions.*"

DACF has engaged in productive conversations with the bill's sponsor and relevant state agencies regarding LD 1141. While we cannot support the bill's original language establishing a new procurement program under DACF's purview, it is our understanding that the sponsor is working on revised language that maintains the bill's important intent while better aligning with DACF's operational capabilities and the goals of partner agencies.

**Background on DACF's farm-to-institution work**

DACF currently supports the existing Maine foods procurement program that sets forth the goal that by 2025, 20% of food and food products procured by state-funded institutions be from Maine. A Local Procurement Planning and Research Associate focuses on this work, and several institutions, including two psychiatric hospitals and eight correctional facilities, have been our partners. As it is now 2025 and many facilities have reached the 20% Maine food goal, LD 1141, as originally written, seeks to set a bigger and more ambitious target of State institutions' purchasing of Maine foods.<sup>1</sup>

State-funded institutions purchasing 30% Maine-grown or processed food by 2030 also aligns with Strategy E.3 in Maine's Climate Action Plan *Maine Won't Wait* to "Increase the amount of food consumed in Maine from state food producers to 30 percent by 2030." Ensuring that institutions purchase Maine food is important to enable Maine people to enjoy locally grown food, regardless of their background or income level. Institutions can use their purchasing power

---

<sup>1</sup> The Department's work has focused on those institutions whose procurement programs are under the authority of the Executive branch and whose budgets are appropriated by the Legislature.

to support the local community by purchasing Maine-grown food, as those dollars stay in the local economy, creating a local multiplier effect that benefits the economy as a whole while also directly supporting food producers. Selling to institutions can be a great market for local farms as many institutions purchase large amounts of food year-round.

**Suggested Improvements:**

DACF's Local Procurement Planning and Research Associate currently has a relatively narrow scope of work that may make it difficult to reach the revised 30% goal. As it currently exists, this position is not directed formally in statute to collaborate with non-State institutional buyers, including most of the hospitals in Maine, which serve almost all residents, or private colleges, which may have the motivation and financial resources to source Maine-grown food. Though every institution is different, they operate in the same food system, so any improvements to the farm-to-institution sphere have the potential to impact all institutions, regardless of funding status, positively. Expanding the purview of this position will help achieve the State's goals, improve public health, and support Maine farmers and food processors. We, therefore, support language that expands the scope of this position.

Lastly, State-funded institutions collectively have State-administered contracts detailing where they can purchase food. Ensuring that future contract language enables more local food purchasing will help institutions reach the state's goals.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions and can be available during the work session.