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THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

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**LD 1198, "Resolve, Directing the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to
Assess Its Current Meat and Poultry Inspection Programs."
Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry
April 1, 2025**

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry:

My name is Russ Black; and I represent Senate District 5, which is home to many agricultural producers. I'm here today to present LD 1198, "Resolve, Directing the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to Assess Its Current Meat and Poultry Inspection Programs."

This bill directs the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to review the meat and poultry inspection process and find ways to improve it for both producers and consumers. I've seen firsthand how difficult it can be for local farmers to navigate the current inspection system. Whether it's delays, confusion around exemptions, or complicated regulations, many producers face real challenges trying to comply with the rules while keeping their businesses running smoothly.

This bill takes a thoughtful approach to addressing these issues. It will ask the Department to review the inspection process, including exemptions, and gather input from farmers, processors, and experts like the University of Maine Cooperative Extension. By working with these groups, the Department can better understand the challenges and come up with solutions.

The bill also aims to give smaller producers more flexibility, which is important to help them succeed. By reviewing the exemptions and working with federal agencies like the USDA, we can make sure Maine's producers are held to the right standards without unnecessary red tape that can make it harder for them to thrive.

The Department will have until January 15, 2026, to submit a report with recommendations, and that will give us the chance to make any necessary changes. This bill is an important step toward improving the inspection process and supporting Maine's agricultural community.

I encourage the Committee to support this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.