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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,  
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY**

**IN SUPPORT OF LD 1213**

*An Act to Allow the Premiums and Gratuities Paid for Any Agricultural Events Approved by the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to Be Considered in Apportionment of Stipends to Agricultural Fairs*

**April 1, 2025**

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, my name is Michelle Webb. I am the Director of the Agriculture Resource Development (ARD) Division within the Bureau of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources. I am speaking on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) in support of LD 1213, *An Act to Allow the Premiums and Gratuities Paid for Any Agricultural Events Approved by the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to Be Considered in Apportionment of Stipends to Agricultural Fairs*.

Title 7 MRSA §86 sub-§5 directs the DACF Commissioner to distribute the agricultural fair Stipend Fund according to the amount of premiums for agricultural competitions actually paid by those licensees in full and in cash or valuable equivalent. The current statute limits stipend payments to competitions. Premiums used to determine stipend payments under this subsection are currently limited to the premiums paid for agricultural competitions in ten specific categories, from livestock and poultry to home-canned, home-cooked, and home-baked goods.

LD 1213 revises the current statute to add an eleventh “all other” category to be written as “Any other agricultural event approved by the Commissioner.”

DACF supports this statute revision and also proposes the following amendments to address outdated terminology in the same statutory section:

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**Title 7 §86 sub-§5: Distribution to all eligible licensees:**

Premiums and gratuities used to determine apportionment under this subsection are limited to ~~those paid for:~~ the premiums paid for agricultural competitions in the following areas:

- a. Livestock and poultry
- b. Vegetables, grains, fruit, and flowers
- c. Products derived from dairy and livestock
- d. Home-canned, home-cooked, and home-baked goods
- e. Grange and farm contests ~~exhibits~~
- f. ~~Boys and Girls Club Exhibits~~ Youth agriculture events
- g. Mechanical arts
- h. ~~Domestic and fancy articles~~ Arts and crafts produced in the home
- i. Pulling contests for equines and oxen ~~and~~
- j. Pulling contests for farm tractors and pick-up trucks
- k. Any other agricultural competition approved by the Commissioner.

In addition, DACF requests striking the word “gratuities” in the statute. It is an undefined term, which is an area of misunderstanding and diverse interpretation. We suggest the following statutory changes:

**Title 7 §86 sub-§5: Distribution to all eligible licensees:**

The amount remaining in the Stipend Fund after distributions in accordance with subsections 2, 3, and 4 must be divided among fair licensees meeting the eligibility criteria in subsection 6, prorated according to the amount of premiums ~~and gratuities~~ actually paid by those licensees in full and in cash or valuable equivalent.

DACF appreciates the opportunity to work with the Committee to make statute revisions that will benefit Maine’s agricultural fairs. We believe these amendments to LD 1213 provide additional necessary updates to the statute and will enhance the Stipend Fund payment process.

Thank you for your time. I would happily answer any questions now or in the work session.