

Maine Dairy Industry Association  
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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS**

*in SUPPORT of*

***“LD362 An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Replenish the Land for Maine's  
Future Program”***

Good morning Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of Committee On Appropriations and Financial Affairs, my name is Annie Watson and I, along with Heath Miller, represent the Maine Dairy Industry Association. (MDIA)

MDIA represents the 138 cow-dairy farms in the 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. Our producers range in size from five to 2,000 cows. We have 91 farms producing milk using conventional systems of production, and 47 using organic systems. Twelve of these farms are producer dealers, while the remaining 126 ship their milk to a processor. All but two of these farms are owned and managed by Maine families. Some are multi-generational families who have stewarded Maine’s farmland for hundreds of years, while many are first generation farmers, just starting on their own family's farm journey. It is on behalf of these farms that we would like to submit this testimony in support of LD 362.

To love Maine is to love its wild woods and mountains, its unharnessed waters and quiet lakes, as well as for the lush open spaces, often hiding among them. Our Maine dairy farms manage approximately 700,00 acres of this open space. This land is not only vital for our food security, but it is a part of the beloved rural landscape of our state. The Land for Maine’s Future Program is an example of our state’s commitment to protecting these beloved landscapes, recognizing the fact that our future social and economic well-being depends upon maintaining the quality and availability of natural areas. These areas are a benefit to Mainers for recreation, hunting and fishing, conservation, wildlife habitat, vital ecological functions and scenic beauty. The State has a responsibility to assure that this Maine heritage is passed on to future generations. Protecting farmland is an important aspect of LMF, stipulating that 10% of funds raised must go toward protecting farmland. Farmland preservation projects provide critical support for farmer and community efforts to keep land in production rather than being developed.

Access to farmland continues to be an issue for Maine farmers. On my own farm, we rent approximately 300 acres from 10 different land owners, and we are considered a relatively small farm, milking 70 cows. Our dependence on this land base and our land owners is a constant

worry, as pressures mount from encroaching development opportunities. Protecting land from these pressures is a way to ensure that we have the land base to support our farm economy, and are able to both increase the financial security of Maine's farmers and increase farmer access to land.

Farmland protection is only one piece of the program, and the protection of all other land for its natural, economic and recreational value is critical to preserving our way of life as Mainers.

We fully support this request for investment from the people of Maine.

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