



Russell Black
Senator, District 5

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

**LD 362 “An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to
Replenish the Land for Maine's Future Program”
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
April 10, 2025**

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs:

My name is Senator Russell Black, and I represent District 5. I am also a farmer and a supporter of conservation efforts here in our state. I am here today to introduce LD 362, “An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Replenish the Land for Maine's Future Program.”

This proposed bond will allocate \$50,000,000 toward the acquisition and preservation of vital lands throughout Maine. It will focus on conserving working farms, critical wildlife habitats—including key deer wintering areas—public water access points, and working waterfronts. Additionally, it will support outdoor recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, and more.

It feels like we are at a crossroads in Maine's history. Maine's beautiful nature, agricultural lands, and natural resources are being bought up at a concerning pace from wealthy out of state individuals and organizations. These lands are not only essential to our economy but also to the identity and lifestyle of our state. To make matters worse, after these lands are bought up, they're oftentimes divided and sold at prices the average Mainer can't afford.

An example from my district took place in central Franklin County, involving two parcels of land near Mt. Blue State Park. One of the parcels spanning 3000 acres and surrounding a great trout pond is being bought up by a man from Montana to become his private hunting compound. This land is now posted and gated.

The other parcel is less than 10 miles away from that one and is 5000 acres right next to Mt. Blue State park. This one was bought by a land developer from Florida. I hunted moose on this parcel 5 years ago and now there are 175 camps and secondary homes being built within sight of the observation tower on the mountain. These are just two examples, and there are many more situations just like this occurring in our state.

As a farmer and a fiscal conservative, I believe we should only spend taxpayer dollars when it's absolutely necessary and when it delivers real, lasting value — and protecting Maine's farmland does just that. We've lost over 82,000 acres in just five years. That's not sustainable if we want to keep growing our own food and supporting rural jobs. Programs like Land for Maine's Future have been helpful, but they haven't always worked well for farmers — the process can be too slow and too complicated. That's why the Legislature created the Working Farmland Access and Protection Program — to give us a more efficient, farmer-focused tool. When a dairy farm is at risk of being sold off for development, we need to move quickly and responsibly. This program isn't about growing government — it's a commonsense investment in Maine's long-term self-reliance, and it's the kind of spending that protects both our land and our bottom line.

I urge you to support this bond, which will make a lasting difference for Maine and our future generations.

Thank you for your time and consideration.