



Stacy Brenner
Senator, District 30

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

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Augusta, Maine 04333

Co-sponsor testimony of Senator Stacy Brenner in support of

**LD 362, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Replenish the Land for
Maine's Future Program**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

April 10, 2025

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and honorable members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee. My name is Senator Stacy Brenner, and I represent Senate District 30, which includes all of Gorham and much of Scarborough. I'm here to voice my strong support for **LD 362**, "*An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Replenish the Land for Maine's Future Program.*"

In the spirit of transparency, I want to share that I am also the President and CEO of Maine Farmland Trust. I've spent my career devoted to farmland conservation, improving access to land, and supporting farm business viability. I know firsthand how powerful the Land for Maine's Future (LMF) program can be — because I am, in many ways, a product of it.

Though I didn't grow up in Maine, I came here in 2001 with a dream of farming. The open, tillable land and clean water drew me in. My husband and I now own and operate Broadturn Farm, a working farm on land owned by the Scarborough Land Trust — land conserved in 2004 using funds from the LMF program.

Thanks to that investment, 434 acres that might otherwise have become a subdivision — 174 houses on 2.5-acre lots — are instead home to our farm, our family, our employees, and a thriving community. The land supports agriculture, recreation, hunting, and open space — a vibrant mix of what makes Maine special.

We've negotiated a 99-year lease with the land trust that gives our farm business long-term security. This model of affordable access allows us to invest deeply — in our people, in infrastructure, and in the community. Starting and running a farm takes capital, and every dollar matters. Since we had access to conserved land, we've been able to put those dollars into building a strong business.

Over the years, Broadturn Farm Inc. has contributed about \$500,000 in payroll, income, and sales tax to the state of Maine. We've created year-round and seasonal jobs and supported dozens of local businesses — from equipment repair to construction contractors. This is what farmland can do when it's kept in production: it fuels the local economy, year after year.

But here's the most important part: none of this would have been possible without access to land. As first-generation farmers, we didn't inherit a farm. We had student debt and no access to commercial credit. We had the dream and the drive — but we needed a path in. LMF helped create that path.

Now, another generation of farmers is looking to Maine with that same dream. Replenishing the LMF program sends a clear message: Maine values its agricultural heritage, welcomes new farmers, and is committed to protecting the land that feeds us.

While LMF has done a lot of good, it's not always easy for farmers to access. That's why the Legislature created the Working Farmland Access and Protection Program — to make farmland conservation more responsive and better tailored to agriculture's needs. When a farm is on the brink of being sold or developed, we need a tool that can move quickly to protect that land. Farm families do not always have the capacity to wait for the long process of the LMF easement approval process to unfold. This program is about smart, focused investment, not expanding government.

We've lost over 82,000 acres of farmland in just five years. That's not just a number — it's a lost opportunity for food production, for rural economies, and for young farmers ready to grow. Let's not lose more. I would respectfully encourage the committee to consider directing a portion of the bond to the Working Farmland Access and Protection Program to help streamline the work of farmland protection.

I'll leave you with the words of Russell Libby, a mentor and the former executive director of MOFGA. In his poem *Obligations*, he writes:

If a man about five foot six could clear this land,
Lay stone walls,
Haul and hew timbers,
Raise the big barn,
Milk cows by hand twice a day,
Plow with oxen,
Shear, mow,
Pitch on, stow away,
Work taxes out by building roads,
And keep at it for fifty years,
The very least I should do
Is keep the stone walls in clear view.

Let us honor that legacy. I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 362 — to preserve Maine's farmland, invest in our future farmers, and keep our working lands working.

Thank you.

Stacy Brenner
State Senator, District 30