



**Testimony of Andrea Maker  
on behalf of FocusMaine**

**in Support of LD 1140, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to  
Strengthen the Resilience and Growth of Maine's Agricultural Economy before the  
Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs  
April 10, 2025**

**LEADERSHIP TEAM**

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Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and honorary Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs members. My name is Andrea Maker, and I am the President of FocusMaine, a nonprofit organization dedicated to accelerating the growth of Maine's high-potential, high-quality job sectors, including the food economy, which creates quality jobs for Maine people.

I am here today to testify in strong support of LD 1140, a \$45 million bond that would make needed investments in Maine's agricultural products and food producers and processors. This bond would address some of the biggest challenges farmers face today—outdated infrastructure, lack of capital, and a changing climate that's creating more risk and uncertainty. These aren't abstract issues. They affect real businesses and people across the state working incredibly hard to produce food, support their families and communities, and contribute to Maine's economy.

At FocusMaine, we've seen how targeted investments in food production, particularly in equipment and the expansion of processing capacity, can make a large difference. For six years, through a partnership with CEI, we have awarded Tastemakers grants to food businesses to support Maine's food economy. While we're proud of the impact this program has made, the demand for capital far exceeds what we can offer. In 2025, only 10 out of 95 eligible applicants received grants of up to \$25,000, leaving many high-quality applicants and their growth potential unfunded. This demonstrates the high need for greater capital infusion into our food economy, and LD 1140 would help to meet that demand.

Companies supported by the Tastemakers grant program have added 310 direct jobs—accounting for nearly half of the 676 direct jobs created by all FocusMaine-supported businesses since 2017. This makes Tastemakers, our access to capital program, one of our most impactful programs in terms of jobs added per company served.

Investments in Maine's food businesses ripple outward by creating jobs, bringing in revenue to the state, and keeping businesses operating for the next generation. In a 2024 report released by FocusMaine, *Cultivating Prosperity: A Strategic Plan for Growing Maine's Food Economy*, Camoin Associates found that over the past five years job growth in Maine's food economy significantly outpaced the state's overall job growth. The same report found that Maine's food economy's gross regional product

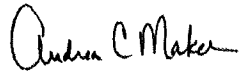
(GRP) was more than \$2.8 billion in 2022, contributing roughly 3% of the state's total GRP.

That being said, there's still opportunity for growth. Processing and supply chain infrastructure are essential for value-added products, yet Camoin Associates' research found that Maine is leaving value on the table by exporting raw products to be processed elsewhere. This is a major missed opportunity for bringing value-added dollars to the state. LD 1140 would expand the state's food economy infrastructure investment, which can help us capture this value and strengthen Maine's economy.

LD 1140 wouldn't just respond to immediate needs—it would move us toward a future where Maine's food economy is more competitive and more resilient. It's a meaningful step toward ensuring that food production in Maine continues to grow.

On behalf of FocusMaine, I respectfully urge you to support LD 1140 and vote to move this bond measure forward.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Andrea C. Maker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Andrea" and last name "Maker" clearly legible.

Andrea Cianchette Maker  
President, FocusMaine