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**LD 1297, "Resolve, to Establish the Committee to Study
the Use of Sunflower Crops to Produce Biofuels"**

**Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry
April 10, 2025**

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry:

I am Trey Stewart; and I represent Senate District 2, which includes municipalities in Penobscot and Aroostook Counties. I am here today to present LD 1297, "Resolve, to Establish the Committee to Study the Use of Sunflower Crops to Produce Biofuels."

It's true that Aroostook County is known for outdoor adventures, rolling farmlands and breathtaking landscapes; but did you also know that the Crown of Maine has some of the most picturesque sunflower fields? As it turns out, Aroostook County isn't that much different than Maui in Hawaii. I learned this while attending the Maine Energy Marketers Association annual conference in June of last year. The guest speaker was a woman from Hawaii who is the co-founder of Pacific Biodiesel, a company that produces fuel from oils and is strongly committed to sustainability and environmental stewardship.

Pacific Biodiesel planted sunflower fields on hundreds of acres in Maui. Sunflowers are known for their ability to attract bees and other pollinators, which are crucial for the health and reproduction of many plant species. But the main reason for these sunflowers? Biofuels.

As the only commercial producer of liquid biofuels in Hawaii, Pacific Biodiesel turns these flowers into oil that is used to power the island. The seeds are harvested and pressed into oil in a crushing mill. Parts of the plant that aren't harvested remain in the field as compost. One hundred gallons of oil is produced per acre. Pacific Biodiesel produces roughly 32,775 gallons of biodiesel annually from its Maui sunflowers.

I am proud to sponsor LD 1297 as a way to explore Maine's natural resources to help reduce the use of fossil fuels and potentially provide a great option for those concerned with climate change. This Resolve establishes the Committee to Study the Use of Sunflower Crops to Produce Biofuels, which is directed to study the feasibility of using the State's sunflower crops to produce biofuels and review current and past legislation and biofuel projects in Hawaii as a potential model for use in this State. The Committee is required to submit a report and suggested

legislation by December 3, 2025 to the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology and the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, who are then authorized to report out legislation based on the report to the Second Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature. The Committee would consist of 12 members:

- One member of the Senate who serves on the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- One member of the Senate who represents Aroostook County, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- One member of the House of Representatives who serves on the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- One member of the House of Representatives who represents Aroostook County, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- Two members, one of whom represents the office of the senior United States Senator and one of whom represents the office of the junior United States Senator, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- One member representing the office of United States Representative from the State's Second Congressional District, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- One member who serves on the Maine Potato Board, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- One member representing the University of Maine at Presque Isle, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- One member representing the Maine Energy Marketers Association, appointed by the President of the Senate; and
- Two members representing renewable energy companies in the State, appointed by the Speaker of the House.

I appreciate your time and attention and respectfully ask you to support LD 1297.