

Good afternoon, Senator Grohoski, Representative Cloutier, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Lisa M. Hanscom. I'm a fourth-generation wild blueberry grower, co-owner of Welch Farm in Roque Bluffs, and Chair of the Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine. While we sell most of our crop to processors, we also operate a small fresh pack business and were among the first small farms in Maine to offer agritourism over 25 years ago.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on an issue vital to Maine's agricultural economy: the grower portion of the wild blueberry tax.

Doing away with the grower portion of this tax—even for one year—would be a mistake.

While the processor portion would remain, removing the grower tax would:

- **Reduce total funding** available to the Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine.
- **Weaken the voice of small and mid-size growers** in decision-making processes that directly impact their businesses and communities.

This tax is not imposed by the state. It is a **grower-supported and grower-led investment** in our collective future. It funds critical work:

- Marketing and promotion of Maine's iconic crop.
- Research and development.
- Technical support and innovation.
- Advocacy and access to federal grants.

The Commission has successfully used grower dollars to:

- Leverage **millions in federal funding**.
- Support **research at the University of Maine** to help growers adapt to pests, climate change, and market demands.
- **Expand market access** and drive new product development.

Suspending this tax disrupts all of that.

Even a one-year pause would mean delayed contracts, stalled research, and lost momentum—damage that won't be quickly undone.

This is a modest, fair, and essential tax.

It ensures that **all commercial growers contribute** and benefit equally. It keeps Maine's wild blueberry industry competitive against large-scale cultivated operations elsewhere.

We are not asking for more. We are asking to keep what works.

Please stand with Maine growers.

Protect the grower portion of the tax.

Keep our industry strong.

Ensure our wild blueberry legacy thrives for generations to come.

Thank you.