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Maine's Rural Development Council

**Testimony of Nancy Smith, CEO, GrowSmart Maine
in support of LD 1999, An Act To Exclude Agricultural Leases From
The Definition Of "Subdivision" Under The Planning And Land Use
Regulation Laws**

January 8, 2026

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development,

As you know, GrowSmart Maine is a statewide non-partisan non-profit organization helping communities navigate change in alignment with smart growth. We advocate for smart growth policies and investments, share in thought leadership, host convenings, and provide technical assistance toward smart growth practices and outcomes. All this so Maine communities are places where people feel safe, that they belong, and where they can thrive.

Prior to my sixteen years with GrowSmart, I farmed in Monmouth for seventeen years. I know the value of ag leases for both the property owner who likely wants to maintain active farming on the land, and the farmer who likely isn't able to buy farmland. Agricultural leases are not new, and often they are not about money. They are about keeping farmland productive.

I appreciate the testimony posted online from Nate Drummond, a farmer in Bowdoinham. He outlines a strong argument for this bill, and I agree with his suggestion that the bill also reference leases for timber harvesting, foraging, and other uses of natural resources distinct from development. Subdivision law is not intended to manage this kind of agreement.

This issue is appropriate for a stand-alone bill, as we await the outcome of LD 161 proposing a stakeholder group to modernize subdivision laws. Given the uncertainty of whether 161 would address policy as well as processes of subdivision, I'm inclined to support passage of LD 1999. It protects farmland without creating barriers to development of housing.