



Russell Black
Senator, District 5

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

**LD 2094, "An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Support
Maine's Agricultural and Forestry Sectors"**

**Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
January 20, 2026**

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs:

I am Russell Black; and I represent Senate District 5, which includes several communities in Franklin, Kennebec and Somerset Counties. I am here today to speak in support of LD 2094, *"An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Support Maine's Agricultural and Forestry Sectors."* This \$40 million bond represents an investment in Maine's agricultural and forestry sectors – industries that form the backbone of our rural economy and embody our state's heritage.

If you talk to farmers and loggers, they will tell you that they are in crisis mode. Blueberry, apple and forage crops, such as hay, are suffering from the worst drought in years – some with 40-60% losses. These industries are facing high costs in their purchases of supplies, parts and equipment. At the same time many of these owners are at retirement age.

As I drive into Augusta each day, I now go by two farms being sold, going out of the farming business – one a solar farm and the other a housing development – both planting their last crop. Funds from this bond will help keep working farms productive and operational, preventing farmland conversion to development and maintaining the rural character our communities value.

The loss of markets is killing loggers. Within an hour's drive of my farm, there are a dozen loggers ready to call it quits; but they cannot find anyone who is willing to buy them out. This bond will directly support rural economies that are often underserved by other economic development initiatives, provide targeted drought relief to help farmers manage natural disasters, promote soil conservation and responsible land stewardship and strengthen our local economy by supporting family farms and local businesses.

I would prefer to see funding for agriculture and farming in the state's budget; however, if that is not possible, this bond would represent an investment in Maine's future that aligns with our values of supporting private enterprise and preserving our heritage industries. We need to step up and protect our rural landscape before it is too late. Thirty percent local food production by 2030 is never going to happen unless we invest in our agricultural infrastructure.

Thank you for your time and consideration.