

Good afternoon Senator Talbot-Ross, Representative Plueker and distinguished members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee.

My name is Hope Ricker. I am a Past-President of the Maine Association of Agricultural Fairs and here today representing the Pittston Fair, one of Maine's smaller agricultural fairs.

Today I am here to testify in opposition to LD 2096, specifically Section 1., Lines 11-26 and Section 5. Changing the definition of an "Agricultural fair" is not necessary. Fairs have been operating very successfully in the State of Maine under the present definition for many years, my fair for 70 years. Changing the definition to the suggested wording in this bill will have a profound impact on many fairs in the State – especially the small fairs.

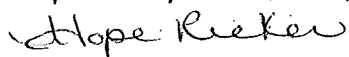
The agricultural community has changed drastically with many fewer farms in the Pittston area. Competitions in many species of livestock and poultry are just not feasible with the exhibitors that we have come to our fair. We offer educational opportunities and demonstrations for fair goers to learn about livestock, poultry and other agricultural related topics. Requiring 3 or more youth agriculture events would also offer a challenge for my fair. Offering Competitions for a minimum of 3 consecutive fair days would put one of our Maine Fairs totally out of business and directly affect all of the smaller fairs and many of the medium size fairs.

Going to the Pittston Fair is a tradition in my community. This is a place where social interaction is face to face – not on a screen. Non-profits have an opportunity to reach members of the community as well as local businesses. Friends and families gather with each other and take in all we have to offer, agricultural education and a few competitions, affordable family friendly local entertainment and a great sense of community. We do not need that to be redefined.

Each fair in Maine is unique, which is what makes them so special. The hundreds of volunteers put their hearts and souls into making their fairs a special place to visit. We remain the premier agricultural education entity in the State of Maine – we do not need to be redefined.

I will be available at the work session to answer any questions. Thank you for your time and consideration along with your continued support of our 25 Maine Agricultural Fairs.

Respectfully Submitted,



Hope Ricker, Past Pres. MAAF Assoc. and member Pittston Fair

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