

January 27, 2026

Good afternoon Senator Talbot-Ross, Representative Pluecker and members of the ACF committee. I am MaryAnne Kinney of Knox (where cows still outnumber people) and am submitting testimony in **opposition** of **LD 2096 An Act Regarding Scheduling of Agricultural Fairs and Pulling Events**.

I am very concerned with the changes being made to the definition of an agricultural fair in Maine. By narrowing the scope of competitions this could adversely affect Maine's smaller Agricultural Fairs. The one that caught my attention first was the Washington County Fair. A 3 day fair that from what I've been told is struggling on its own and this added set of rules could end the fair's distinction as an agricultural fair. I appreciate that the beginning of the definition is left alone "'Agricultural fair' or 'fair' means an exhibition that is designed to promote education and encourage improvement in agriculture". When the Bangor Fair stopped promoting agriculture, my family stopped attending as visitors. We go to the fairs for the agricultural components. Education in our state regarding agriculture is lacking. We open our farm to visitors for the purpose of education. It amazes me how little the general public knows about agriculture and our agricultural fairs no matter their size help bring this education to the public.

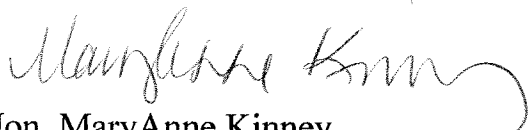
I am not sure what prompted the language in this bill to even be presented and I hope my thoughts are wrong; but in speaking with some members of this committee over the weekend I fear I am correct, so I am going to address the idea of fairs overlapping with their dates. I was told that the ones that currently overlap are far away from one another. So I want to mention several that really are not that far away when it comes to who attends the fairs. Topsham and Skowhegan Fairs are 67 miles apart, about 1hr and 20 min drive; Windsor Fair and Blue Hill Fair are 75 miles apart, about 1hr and 30 min drive; Clinton Lions and Litchfield Fairs are 47 miles apart, about a 50 min drive; Farmington and Common Ground Fairs are 53 miles apart, about 1hr and 15 min drive; Common Ground and Cumberland Fairs are 90 miles apart, about 1hr and 40 min drive; and Cumberland and Fryeburg Fairs are 49 miles apart, about 1hr and 20 min drive. Most of the fairs that overlap do so by only a day or 2 but I want to draw your attention to a fair that is arguably the oldest (or darn close) running fair in Maine, the Blue Hill Fair. All of its days overlap with the Windsor Fair and the 2 fairs have coexisted for a long time without issue. They draw their agricultural exhibits from similar geographical areas. I have exhibited at both in the past (not at the same time). I have stuck with the Blue Hill Fair for the past 20 years because they want me to be there (there is more to this comment but it is irrelevant to this legislation).

During 2020, all agricultural fairs were cancelled, some at the very last minute. This caused high expenses for the individual fair associations who now had no income for the year. I was a sitting representative at the time and directly questioned the DACF Commissioner about how the department could help these organizations and was told "(they have no expenses so they should be fine)". I have spoken to the organizers of the Blue Hill Fair over the years about their expenses outside of fair dates. The big one is electricity. Their electric usage during the fair spikes and sets their year round rate at the highest for the rest of the year based on the 5 days the

fair is in operation (you could argue 10 days with set up and set down of all vendors). During 2020 I was told that the Fryeburg Fair lost \$2 million in revenues and struggled to keep up maintenance throughout that year. In 2021, the Commissioner stopped by my booth at the Fryeburg Fair to let me know that the Department was able to secure funding to help struggling farmers due to the pandemic. I repeated my question about what help the agricultural fairs would receive and was told there was nothing for them.

I am not one for fixing squabbles with legislation especially studies but if there is a real issue with overlapping dates of agricultural fairs then there clearly needs to be more evidence brought before this committee and just the fact that this hearing occurred today hopefully brings that information about. This legislation is not ready for prime time and should result in ought not to pass at this time.

Thank you for your consideration, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "MaryAnne Kinney".

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