



# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, Distinguished Members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee:

We are writing today to express our strong opposition to LD 2096, *“An Act Regarding Scheduling of Agricultural Fairs and Pulling Events”* as the Senator and Representative for one of Maine’s smallest, most rural, and newest agricultural fairs – the Washington County Fair, which takes place in the heart of Pembroke, Maine.

Maine’s small agricultural fairs are truly volunteer, hand-to-mouth operations that embody family friendly activities, a strong community feel, and the rural character of our state. The Washington County Fair has quickly become a late summer destination for local people who want to enjoy a day out with friends, their children, and the community.

It is a fair showcasing neighbors helping neighbors, the communities of our entire region, and the farming tradition many Downeasters grew up with. It is a place for live music, harness racing, animal demonstrations, and to showcase the best in local foods, crafts, and resources. While all of this takes place over two days in late August – wedged between the much more well-advertised Wild Blueberry Festival in Machias and larger fairs over Labor Day weekend – the work that goes into the Washington County Fair takes untold months to plan, organize, and pull together. Volunteers descend on the Pembroke Fairgrounds weeks in advance to lay the groundwork for the next year’s fair and spend untold hours cleaning up in its wake.

Every year the stress and strain on this volunteer crew increases as volunteers burn out, age out, and struggle to come up with new and innovative things to attract fairgoers.

Our fair does not want or need an edict out of Augusta that we must add a third day to be considered a bona fide state fair. We also cannot afford to

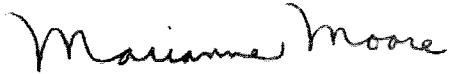
lose valuable state funding simply because it doesn't have the capacity to add a third day.

In closing, it is not just the Washington County Fair vendors and patrons who benefit from these two days of activity in central, rural Washington County. It is the rural economy, and businesses like Coastal Subs in Pembroke who see increased foot traffic on fair days, or lodgings that welcome visitors to the area for the fair. It IS Washington County, as a whole, who benefits as residents from near and far realize there are fun, family-friendly things they can do without having to travel to Ellsworth, Bangor, or Portland.

Please listen to the concerns of our local fair association and their brothers and sisters around the state who support allowing exhibition judging up to 24 hours prior to the assigned fair dates; however, they are not in support of requiring a minimum of three consecutive fair days.

Please vote ought not to pass or consider amending this bill to address our concerns.

Thank you!



Sen. Marianne Moore



Rep. Will Tuell