

Quarantine pest testimony:

I would like to thank you each for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Bruce Flewelling, I grow processing potatoes in Easton with my two sons. I serve as the president of the Agricultural Bargaining Council, more commonly known as ABC. We are a grower group that negotiates pre-season contracts with the in-state processors valued at over \$95 million. Potatoes are the biggest agricultural crop in Maine, contributing over \$1 billion to the state economy. I am here today to ask you to pass the proposed legislation to prevent the import of potato seed from a quarantined region. This is a small volume of seed that is threatening the entire Maine potato industry. These potential imports are different varieties that are part of a very small niche market that is threatening our entire industry. The farms importing this seed are not isolated, they are next to farms that are part of our multi-million-dollar industry. This import issue is literally jeopardizing multi-generational family farms in Maine. We are not discussing an issue that could increase our cost of production, lower yields or quality, we are talking about a known quarantine pest that could halt our industry. I would like to thank the committee for listening to my testimony today.