

## Testimony in Support of LD 473

### **An Act to Support Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry in Maine**

(Resolve, Directing the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to Quarantine Potatoes Capable of Carrying Harmful Plant Disease or Insect Infestation)

**March 19, 2026**

Senator Rachel Talbot Ross, Senate Chair

Representative Bill Pluecker, House Chair

Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker and Members of the Committee:

McCain Foods respectfully submits this testimony in strong support of **LD 473**, An Act to Support Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry in Maine. As a global potato processor with a long-standing processing facility in Maine, McCain Foods has a direct and significant vested interest in the long-term health, biosecurity, and competitiveness of the Maine potato industry.

Maine's potato sector is foundational to the state's agricultural economy and rural communities. Our processing operations depend on a reliable supply of high-quality, disease-free potatoes grown by Maine farmers. The introduction of serious plant pests or diseases—such as Columbia root-knot nematode, potato cyst nematodes, or potato wart—would have devastating and long-lasting impacts not only on growers, but also on processors, allied businesses, and Maine's domestic and international market access.

Recent events surrounding the attempted importation of seed potatoes from known regulated areas underscore the urgency of this legislation. Once an invasive pest becomes established, control is extremely costly, often impractical, and can permanently alter production practices. Even a single introduction could jeopardize Maine's seed potato certification program, disrupt trade with Canada and other key markets, and result in significant economic losses across the entire supply chain.

From McCain Foods' perspective as a processor, the integrity of Maine's potato production system is inseparable from our ability to continue investing in the state, supporting local growers, and providing stable employment. Preventative measures—such as those outlined in LD 473—are far more effective and responsible than responding after damage has occurred.

We commend the Maine Potato Board, seed growers, and industry stakeholders for their leadership on this issue, and we appreciate the Committee's willingness to act

swiftly to protect Maine agriculture. LD 473 represents a prudent, proactive step to safeguard the future of the Maine potato industry.

McCain Foods respectfully urges the Committee to support LD 473 and ensure its timely passage. We stand ready to continue working collaboratively with MDACF, legislators, and industry partners to uphold Maine's reputation as a leader in potato quality, seed integrity, and agricultural stewardship.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued support of Maine agriculture.

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