

I am writing to oppose passage of LD 437. As an orchardist, and a member of the Maine Climate Council's Natural and Working Lands (NWL) working group, I think this proposed legislation is unnecessary.

A sub-committee of the NWL working group did indeed identify the need for a central "clearing house" to distribute information on best practices for farmers to employ to help fight global warming. Carbon sequestration in healthy soils is a great way to start, because sustaining healthy soils also boosts the farmer's bottom line.

It was pointed out at the time that, in Maine, we have a strong, centralized institution already in place, conducting research here, collecting relevant information from around the country, and, most importantly, conducting outreach, at every level on all topics agricultural. I refer to the University of Maine Cooperative Extension. Just yesterday, I "attended" a Zoom interactive webinar on cover crops featuring Jason Lilley of the Cumberland County Office. Soil health was front and center in this presentation.

In short, we don't need to legislate soil health, or create a new fund with its attendant oversight requirements, to do what is already being done well. We need to shine a light on, and support the work of, Cooperative Extension.