



Maine Association of Conservation Districts

Working for Maine's Conservation Districts

PO Box 541 Portland, ME 04112

3/3/2021

Written Testimony in Support of LD 437, An Act To Establish the Maine Healthy Soils Program.

To: Senator Jim Dill, Representative Maggie O'Neil and Honorable members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry:

Maine Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) supports LD 437, An Act To Establish the Maine Healthy Soils Program.

Soil health is vital to Maine's future. As our State prioritizes food security, clean water, carbon storage, and natural resources, the importance of healthy soils cannot be overstated.

Visions of the Dust Bowl era are a stark reminder of the devastation that occurs when soils lose the ability to regenerate. Loss of topsoil, nutrients, moisture absorption and retention all contribute to erosion, intense fertilization, pest damage, and the effects of drought.

In Maine, some producers have worked to amend the land through conservation practices which have proven to increase yields, reduce erosion, and enhance organic matter in fields. But there is much more work to do.

As local leaders, Soil and Water Conservation Districts have provided technical assistance, outreach, and education to landowners in soil health and have seen advances in science-based improvements that keep pace with the changing landscapes since those Dust Bowl days.

Soil health practices such as cover cropping, reduced tillage, and crop rotation are a few recognized methods to improve water retention, biodiversity, erosion, compaction, and nutrient management, as described in the documentary, [Living Soil \(livingsoilfilm.com\)](http://livingsoilfilm.com)

Soil health also promotes goals set in Maine for food security, drought resistance, erosion control, and clean water.

But the conservation practices available – not only in agriculture but in urban and coastal areas as well – do no good if landowners are unaware or misunderstand the vital importance of soil health.

A Maine Healthy Soils Program that provides and promotes science-based guidance for achievable economic value and improves growing safe, nutrient dense food for our citizens is an achievable goal. Maine Association of Conservation Districts and the sixteen Soil and Water Conservation Districts are committed to this mission and are supportive of the program.

Sincerely,

Carol Weymouth, Executive Director
Maine Association of Conservation Districts