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Testimony introducing LD 568, “An Act to Establish a Working Farmland Access and Protection Program within the Bureau of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources and a Working Farmland Access and Protection Fund within the Land for Maine’s Future Program”

Presented by Representative Bill Pluecker, House District 95. Presented to the Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry Committee, Thursday, March 18th, 2021.

Good morning Senator Dill, Representative O’Neil, and other distinguished members of the Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry Committee. I am Representative Bill Pluecker from Warren and I represent House District 95 - Appleton, Hope, part of Union, and Warren. Today, I am introducing LD 568, “An Act to Establish a Working Farmland Access and Protection Program within the Bureau of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources and a Working Farmland Access and Protection Fund within the Land for Maine’s Future Program”.

We all know that farming is the cornerstone of our rural economies and an economic engine throughout the state of Maine. Working farmland is not only a pillar to the success of agriculture production, but also our heritage industry and part of Maine’s iconic image that radiates the best parts of our state.

This bill designates the Maine Working Farmland Access and Protection Program within the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. This bill strengthens the alignment between the Department’s farmland conservation goals and the Land for Maine’s Future program, similarly to that of the Working Waterfront Access Protection Fund program at the Department of Marine Resources (DMR).

Establishing the Farmland Access and Protection program is a way for the State and the legislature to demonstrate a commitment to agricultural producers, processors and consumers - that maintaining a stable land base for farmland

District 95: Appleton, Hope, (part) Union & Warren

production is important. The legislation also sets a transparent road map for farmland conservation priorities.

This is a policy statement that farmland conservation matters, and we are committed to pursuing our objectives in a thoughtful and meaningful way.

I urge you to support this bill, and please know that staff from DACF's Land for Maine's Future program is here to answer further questions.