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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,  
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY

In Support of LD 954

*LD 954, An Act To Provide Equal Access to the Benefits of the Maine Food Sovereignty Act*

April 6, 2021

Senator Dill, Representative O'Neil, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, my name is Nancy McBrady, and I am the Director of the Bureau of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources within the Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, speaking on behalf of the Department in support of LD 954, "An Act to Provide Equal Access to the Benefits of the Maine Food Sovereignty Act."

The Department's Division of Quality Assurance and Regulation (QAR) is tasked with implementing both state and federal laws regarding food and food products in commerce. As an essential part of that role, our Consumer Protection Inspectors educate potential vendors about expectations and requirements under the Maine Food Code and the federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. This includes pre-licensure, on-site consultations, including education around labeling requirements, and any necessary allergen disclosures. Consumer Protection Inspectors work with producers however long is necessary to ensure that they understand the importance of sanitation, water quality, and facility requirements in order to offer safe items to the public.

Under the Maine Food Sovereignty Act, communities may pass local ordinances that allow direct producer-to-consumer sale of food, some of which, absent that local ordinance, would otherwise be regulated by the State. LD 954 proposes to add plantations and unorganized territories to the entities that may adopt and enact ordinances under the current Maine Food Sovereignty Act. The Department recognizes the need for this existing Maine law to be applied equally for all residents regardless of where they physically reside or conduct business within the state. The bill proposes no further amendments to the existing Act, and the Department supports adoption of LD 954.

I will be happy to answer any of your questions at this time and will be present at the work session for further discussion as needed.

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