

Hanne Tierney  
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Hello

I am writing to you as a farmer who has sold exclusively at Farmers' Market, we are heading into our 19th year. 100% of our products are sold at markets through out the state. I have been a member of several markets in our state from large to small, and have also served on the boards of many many markets in various markets. Currently I am a member of 4 markets ranging throughout the state from as far north as Bangor to as far south as Portland. We live and farm in Palmyra.

I testified the last time this came around and would like to reach out to all of you and explain some of the rationale behind why I feel it is crucial for you all to vote down this bill. First I would like to explain My primary concern is not one of competition, but one of food safety and market health. For those of you who would like to know my quick bullet points they are here. There is further explanation below.

- We can not assume the public will read a sign to know if someone is licensed or not
- We can not assume that a presentation at market will adequate to show if food was produced in a safe manor
- There aren't any obstacles to getting a license to produce food, that should otherwise not be used. I want everyone to: use hot water, use cleanable surfaces, use disinfectant where appropriate, monitor their refrigeration and freezer temperatures, these should be enforced
- The dollar value to get licensed is small and insignificant. We are talking like \$40 dollars are less in most cases
- It should not be assumed that Farmers' Markets only sell to a few people. Some markets we attend have over a 1000 customers an hour. That is a lot of potential hazard.
- If the state passes this law and leaves this in the farmers hands it is unfairly requiring farmers to create systems to regulate each other at market. I can not count the number of times at market I have been able to point to state regulations to insist a vendor change their display or storage of food to insure food safety. While I understand that the dept of ag has limited resources to enforce food safety at market, the leaders of markets refer to these laws daily.
- Farmers' markets in Maine are amazing thing, we can have a farm producing on 50 acres se up next to a farm producing on 1 acre and sometimes you can not tell that by looking at them. they level the playing field and are a point of entry to so so many farms to learn and scale and be creative with their products. If we do not require licenses to produce this food we risk food safety and in doing so we risk the health of the market.
- Market Farmers are folks of many hats, we are box truck drivers, tractor mechanics, veterinary technicians, agronomist, soil scientist, accountants, floral designers, carpenters, retail sales managers, why why are you going to add to what we need to learn and do by removing the aid we get from the state to say what producers are creating safe products. We don't need or want more work and passing this bill will do just that. Let us mentor the next generation of farmers and allow us to keep this frame work so these young farmers have a starting point and a resource.
- We currently have a mechanism in place to guide people to resources to create safe food, why would we get rid of it without replacing it! that would be two steps backwards for markets around the state.

Farmers' Markets are communities where there are formal mentorships, informal mentorships, support, and encouragement for young and old, new and seasoned farmers. None of us believe that we can do it alone, and most of us have no desire to. Markets in Maine are for the most part co operatively run and managed. We succeed because we work together (which let me say is sometimes a feat!). Competition at market is just part of the function of markets. But also the support of markets. When a customer comes to market I want them to leave with what they came to buy in their hands, I want it to be safe to consume, I want it to have been safe for them to get around market, and I want them to enjoy their visit. And if I know everyone has safe food I do not hestiate sending a customer to another farmer to buy something that I have run short of that day.

Some of the things that markets lean on to know what is safe is our federal and state laws. We know that a third party has inspected and possibly educated our licensed vendors so that they know that some foods require refrigeration, some need to be maintained frozen. I myself learned years ago during an inspection that there was such a thing as to concentrated of a bleach solution to wipe down counter tops and that I might while trying to be clean be causing a toxic situation. I of course am not implying that any vendor would knowingly cause unsafe situations but having been licensed insures that someone who knows has looked over their process and

procedures from production to sale of the products that we are consuming. We can not assume that anyone who might want to try making cheese, or hand pies knows about food safety.

When we take food sovereignty off the farm the customer no longer has eyes on the production area and possibly the actual production. They then are left to trust that it has been made safely. Why not give them minimal insurance that it has been produced to a certain level of criteria easy for everyone to look up if they would like and accessible to all and consistent throughout the state.

While I feel that I could go on for quite some time here I also value your time. I invite any or all of you to reach out to me with any additional questions. I firmly urge you to vote against LD 574.

Thank you for your consideration  
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