

## OFFICE OF POLICY AND LEGAL ANALYSIS

To: Members, Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
From: Karen S. Nadeau, Legislative Analyst  
Date: May 11, 2021  
Subj: **LD 1565, An Act To Strengthen Maine's Agriculture, Food and Forest Economy**

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### Section 2:

- Requires the Commissioner of ACF to work with the Department of Economic and Community Development to carry out the following duties:
  - Strengthen the State's agricultural, food and forest products economy;
  - Expand infrastructure investments in the agricultural, food and forest products economy;
  - Collaborate with other state agencies, economic development organizations and other key institutional partners to establish technical assistance program.
- Establishes the Maine Agriculture, Food and Forest Products Investment Fund to facilitate strategic investments in the State's agricultural, food and forest products processing and manufacturing industries.
- Establishes the Maine Agriculture, Food System and Forest Products Infrastructure Investment Advisory Board
  - 13 members: Commissioner of DACF (or designee), Commissioner of DECD and 11 members appointed jointly by the two commissioners; 3-year terms.

### Section 3:

- Requires the Department of ACF to undertake an assessment to identify specific opportunities for investment in agricultural, food and forest products industries to inform development and structuring of disbursements from the Maine Agriculture, Food and Forest Products Investment Fund and other potential natural resource industry-related funds.
- Requires the Commissioner of ACF to submit a report relating to the assessment to the ACF Committee no later than December 1, 2021.

## TESTIMONY

**Proponents:** *Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry; Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine; Maine Grocers and Food Producers Association; Professional Logging Contractors of Maine; Maine Farmland Trust; Coastal Enterprises, Inc.; Maine Organic Gardeners and Farmers Association; Farmer from Newport; written only: FocusMaine; Maine Food Strategy; Department of Economic and Community Development*

- Builds on LD 1531 from the 129<sup>th</sup> Legislature, which had unanimous support from the ACF Committee, but died upon adjournment of the Second Regular Session due to the pandemic.
- LD 1565 draws on VT's Farm-to-Plate initiative and the VT Working Lands Enterprise Fund, which supports businesses building and modernizing critical processing infrastructure in order to fill gaps in the local supply chain.
- DACF agrees that Maine needs strategic investment in our agricultural, food and forest products infrastructure and supports efforts to move these efforts forward.
- DECD – LD presents an opportunity to invest in Maine producers, processors and the supply chain to sustain their businesses, increase capacity, and increase value-added processing within the state.

**Opponents:** *None*

**NFNA:** *None*

**PRELIMINARY FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT:** *Not yet received.*