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STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



HEATHER JOHNSON
COMMISSIONER

**Testimony Of: Kate Foye
In Support of LD 1565**

An Act To Strengthen Maine's Agriculture, Food and Forest Economy

May 4, 2021

Senator Dill, Representative O'Neil, and members of Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, my name is Kate Foye and I am the Legislative Liaison for the Department of Economic & Community Development. I am submitting written testimony in support of LD 1565.

The Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) is aware of the infrastructure need facing Maine's agriculture, food, and forest products businesses. The need, witnessed through engagement with the business community is supported by the results of a Heritage Industry Infrastructure Survey released by DECD in collaboration with the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and the Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry (DACF).

Representative Talbot Ross's bill, LD 1565, presents an opportunity to invest in Maine producers, processors, and supply chain to sustain their businesses, increase capacity, and increase value added processing within the state. Strategic investment in infrastructure to support agriculture and forestry represents Maine's opportunity to take capitalize on the intersection of our strengths with the latest global trends. As laid out in Maine's Economic Development Strategy, Sustainable food and bio-based alternatives are key to helping Maine develop solutions for climate change, but also spark rural economic development and quality job creation outside of Maine's dense population areas.

The Fund, guided by its advisory committee and informed by the assessment conducted by this department and DACF, will provide much needed structural access to infrastructure investment for Maine's agriculture, food, and forest products businesses. Additionally, the Fund will provide structural access to investment for historically marginalized, underrepresented, and underserved communities, including communities of color, low-income communities, and rural communities.

Thank you and I would be happy to attend the work session if needed.