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May 4, 2021

FocusMaine is pleased to submit this letter in support of the proposed Act to Strengthen Maine's Agriculture, Food, and Forest Economy (LD 1565).

FocusMaine is a private sector-led initiative to accelerate the creation of quality jobs in Maine by investing in three of the state's globally competitive and high-growth fields—agriculture, aquaculture, and biopharmaceuticals. Our efforts in agriculture address challenges in production, sales & marketing, finance and planning. Our programs foster job growth through business support services, funding, workforce development, business attraction, and by helping Maine companies sell more of their products outside of the state.

We use a partnership model to advance our job creation goals, and the proposed Bill fully aligns with our efforts with our agriculture strategy partners, the Maine Center for Entrepreneurs (MCE) and Coastal Enterprises Inc. (CEI). MCE's Cultivator and MarketShare programs and CEI's Tastemaker program grew out of our strategy. Taken together, these programs provide a continuum of care for early- through later-stage companies in the food economy. The proposed Bill would provide a structure for funding important gaps in Maine's food supply chains, and if funded, would accelerate and deepen the impact of our investments.

The Bill also aligns with key elements of Maine's 10-year strategy and recovery plan by providing a mechanism for investment in critical infrastructure needs in the food and forest economy, and with the State's Climate Action Plan by helping to build resilient regional supply chains.

FocusMaine is fully supportive of the proposed Act to Strengthen Maine's Agriculture, Food, and Forest Economy (LD 1565) to build a stronger, more resilient, and more prosperous agricultural economy in Maine.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kimberly Hamilton".

Kimberly Hamilton, PhD
President, FocusMaine