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Legislative body and Community Members,

I write in full support of **LD 2013**.

My name is Beth Schiller and I operate a MOFGA certified organic farm on land in Bowdoinham, Maine. This property has an agricultural easement held by Maine Farmland Trust. I've been a commercial grower in Maine for just over 20 years, but purchased this property in 2018. With soils of "statewide importance," an easement committing it to farming in perpetuity, easy access to markets, prime soil, and located in a community dedicated to agriculture, this property is a dream. Now just four years into rapidly rooting my previously established business here, with a new awareness of PFAS, the health of my business is very much in question.

The land I farm is considered a Tier 1 site of concern. Prior to my ownership, sludge had been spread on my primary growing fields, and my neighbor's land for upward of 20 years.

I represent a wide community of farmers who are directly impacted, but for whom our voices have been quiet to this point in the public conversation. I am a farmer who lives alone and manages my business singularly. I've employees who work for Dandelion Spring year round and rely on this farm for their income. The emotional weight of navigating "normal" business development while holding the DEP letter about PFAS contamination is a lot to hold. I am certain I am one of many farmers who have privately been navigating this time, and for whom LD 2013 could have a significant impact.

Our soils are scheduled for testing in early May. Having received a clean water test, we are currently planning our primary growing season as if all is "normal." If our soil tests return at the end of July with a high level of PFAS, at this point we will have 14 farmers on payroll, and hundreds of thousands of dollars of product in the ground.

Healthy food is essential to a healthy Maine. The beauty of farmland and the strong tie between rural and urban Maine is part of what continues to draw more people and businesses to this state. When I was a child and would visit the statehouse, I'd come home with a pin shaped like a potato. Agriculture, healthy land, is inherent to our history and our present well being.

As a farmer, as a business owner, as a Mainer, I want the next generation to wear our agricultural history proudly as a badge. In the present day, I feel like my well established farm business is at the precipice of amazing growth. I purchased this land with a potential hidden impact that was permitted by the State of Maine. It is up to the State of Maine, to all of us, to support the farmers and land that make up our social,

economic, and environmental base. If due to past permitting we need to suddenly shut down, we are going to need:

- Income replacement to pay our staff and our mortgage
- Business support in transitioning our infrastructure and business model to support new farm practices
- Research on soil and water remediation
- Public support for the face of healthy food and Maine farms
- Private support for the emotional and physical health for farmers under great stress and transition

Financial support to farms affected by PFAS contamination is essential. I urge you to **pass LD 2013** as a start of support to our agricultural community. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Beth Schiller