



**Eric Venturini, Executive Director**

**Testimony in Support of LD 2019. Act Act Relating to Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Contamination in the State**

Senator Dill, Representative O’Neil, and esteemed members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, my name is Eric Venturini and I am the Executive Director of the Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine.

The Wild Blueberry Commission works on behalf of Maine’s 485<sup>1</sup> wild blueberry farmers and businesses who grow wild blueberries on approximately 40,000<sup>2</sup> acres across the state. In 2021 Maine produced 103.8 million pounds of wild blueberries and processed an additional 6.4 million pounds of Canadian wild blueberries, generating a 1.5 penny per pound tax on a total of 110.2 million pounds.<sup>3</sup> Maine production represents approximately 10% of all blueberry production in North America and contributes an estimated 250 million dollars to Maine’s economy each year.

The wild blueberry industry is fortunate that we have not, to our knowledge, been directly impacted by PFAS or PFOA contaminated soils. However, we recognize the damage that PFAS has wrought in other sectors of Maine agriculture and stand in support of this effort to create a fund and a structure to support the farms that have been impacted by this terrible tragedy.

We also recognize the importance of taking time and coordinating with state departments to fully structure this significant funding. It is the farmers themselves who unknowingly spread contaminated biosolids as participants in a State program that have been harmed – and it is to those impacted farmers that this funding should flow. Similarly, I suggest that the Advisory Committee be comprised of a majority of *farmer* members, as that is the group that this funding would seek to aid.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> National Agricultural Statistics Service. 2017. Berries: 2017.

[https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Full\\_Report/Volume\\_1,\\_Chapter\\_2\\_County\\_Level/Maine/st23\\_2\\_0033\\_0033.pdf](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_2_County_Level/Maine/st23_2_0033_0033.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Based on 2019 and 2020 harvested acreage (appx. half of total acreage in any given year).

<https://extension.umaine.edu/blueberries/factsheets/statistics-2/crop-production-statistics-2019/>

<sup>3</sup> Maine Revenue Source data, shared per the terms of a Memorandum of Agreement on data use and privacy between the Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine and the Maine Revenue Service.

