

3 April 2023

## 131st Maine Legislature's Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

### LD 1274: An Act to Increase Land Access for Historically Disadvantaged Populations

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Committee On Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry,

As a born and raised here Mainer and a dairy farmer I am both pleased and grateful to have the opportunity to support this legislation that seeks to strengthen our food system and right our ship. LD 1274: An Act to Increase Land Access for Historically Disadvantaged Populations represents legislation that has been a long time coming and while sweeping and full of change is still just a piece of the puzzle needed as we move forward to ensure equity in our food system and in our communities and economies. But it is a start.

Please accept this testimony as **strong support** that the proposed bill **Ought to Pass**, but also that certain details should be further thought out, and that policy that continues this acknowledgment and action should follow. We have a lot of work to do.

As the first generation on both sides of my family to NOT be born on a farm I like to think that it only took me 2 decades to find myself on a farm and as a first generation farmer in the midst of a centuries old, multi generational dairy farm family. I know my path to agriculture was paved and eased by my privilege and am aware that the history and future of the Nanrantsouak, Wabanaki, and Abenaki were both altered and denied by the establishment of my colonizer ancestors through settlement on unceded land. I know that our history in Maine, and throughout the United States has offered through laws, policy, and systemic racism a society of inequity that has robbed generations of opportunity. I also know that these actions have robbed our present and future of a resilient food system, profitable economy, and productive society. I cannot change the intent of the past but I can acknowledge the impact and I can work to right the ship...and LD 1274 works to do that and because of that it has my support.

Despite my support I am concerned about a few details that I hope will be discussed and possibly adjusted:

1. **The eligibility requirement of being born in Maine.** *I am troubled by this exclusivity as our state cannot realistically raise enough of our own population to truly support an agriculture sector and food system that can truly feed and sustain Maine. Like any other industry and sector Maine needs to welcome those from away- whether they are from Southern Massachusetts, Southern Alabama, Northern California, or from outside our national borders.*

2. **Apprenticeships.** *I am concerned by the application of this term without further specifications of the responsibilities of the farmer who shall be mentoring with regards to pay, housing, etc...In far too many models the abuses of this model of farming has been detrimental to the “apprentice”.*
3. **Farm Conservation Corps.** *I am concerned about the lack of specificity with regards to program administration (both here and in the companion Federal level proposal) that does not include a requirement for a livable wage and again, lacks specificity with regards to farmer responsibilities, and seems inconsistent with our Service Corps programs in Maine. Will Volunteer Maine be involved?*

I know this action is necessary and just, and a must to ensure Maine is the best and strongest that it can be, from our farms and fields to our tables and homes and all along the way. I strongly *urge* you to pass LD 1274, with serious consideration to changes and improvements. As a Maine farmer I am looking forward to welcoming more members to our ranks and our agricultural community.

Thank you for your time and energies as citizen legislators.

With Gratitude,

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