

26 April 2023

Testimony to Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
in support of
LD 1670: An Act to Strengthen Maine's Agriculture, Food and Forest Economy by Funding the Maine Agriculture, Food and Forest Products Investment Fund and Amending Related Provisions of Law

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and Members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry,

I regret being unable to testify today in your presence to support LD 1670: An Act to Strengthen Maine's Agriculture, Food and Forest Economy by Funding the Maine Agriculture, Food and Forest Products Investment Fund and Amending Related Provisions of Law but please accept my written submitted testimony as heartfelt support for this legislation and the accompanying funding that would help to strengthen and better Maine's economy, food system, and communities.

As a dairy farmer, mum, and Mainer it is crucial and important to me that I not only be able to provide and produce good, sustainable nutrition for my neighbours but also that I am able to put good food from a good place on my own family table. By supporting and funding the Maine Ag, Food and Forest Products Investment Fund, and amending appropriately our markets, infrastructure, producers, and consumers all win.

The programming of LD 1670 meets the needs of those in the business of feeding, clothing, and sheltering Mainers by filling the gaps that are created by a lack of capital and business assistance available to us.

LD 1670 meets head on the inequities of lack of access to capital and technical assistance rooted in systemic racism and embedded barriers that hinders historically disadvantaged populations within our food system.

LD 1670 integrates with other programing throughout the state which is focused on increasing and improving the strength of Maine's growers and producers, processors and manufacturers (heritage, newer, and start-ups) though innovation, job creation, and economic growth.

What LD 1670 does is enable the people of Maine to help Maine size and Maine solve the issues and challenges that face our communities and economies by empowering, through access to capital and technical assistance, our food producers and manufacturers - those already serving in those roles and those who are dreaming to do so- making our systems resilient, strong, sustainable, and successful. I know the power of these programs and opportunities- as an applicant to the recent AIIP I saw first hand how the demonstrated need was articulated by applicants, met by a thoughtful grant process, and successful distribution and allocation of funding to those selected. Those recipients are building up and fortifying our infrastructure, our

markets, jobs, and the vitality of our state. And no, our family farm was not successful in our application BUT here I am applauding its work and the results. Why? Because this is what's needed and this is what good programming looks like: meeting the needs and challenges where they are and filling the gaps and raising up ALL.

I urge you to not OUGHT TO PASS on LD 1670 and properly fund and support this bill that continues the work of its foundational legislation that sees and supports Maine's Ag, Food and Forestry Economy for what it is: the engine of Maine's economies and communities and how we ensure that Mainers can put good food from a Maine place on the table.

As always I want to express my gratitude to you all as citizen legislators and for the work, time and effort you put into your roles, and also your attention to my testimony. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,
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