

Testimony to the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

in support of

LD 2188, Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Chapter 26: Producer Margins, A Major Substantive Rule of the Maine Milk Commission

February 7, 2024

Dear Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry:

I am pleased to submit this testimony on behalf of Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences (Bigelow Laboratory) in support of LD 2188, *Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Chapter 26: Producer Margins, A Major Substantive Rule of the Maine Milk Commission*. My name is Deborah Bronk, and I serve as the President and CEO of Bigelow Laboratory in East Boothbay, Maine.

Maine dairy farmers are indispensable partners of Bigelow Laboratory. They bring significant insight as part of our Center for Seafood Solutions and will be primary beneficiaries of transformative research at Bigelow Laboratory to reduce methane production in dairy cattle.

Bigelow Laboratory is an independent, nonprofit research institute in East Boothbay that focuses on the marine life that underpins global ocean health and its incredible potential. Many of these species are microscopic, but together they are a powerhouse that provides half the oxygen we breathe, feeds our oceans, cleans our atmosphere, and recycles nutrients vital to all life. We fuse the interdisciplinary expertise of world-class scientists to discover new insights and develop new applications. Our science is key to the fundamental understanding of the ocean, how it impacts human and environmental health, and how it can provide solutions and innovations that address some of the world's most important opportunities.

Our research is clustered into three primary themes: *Ocean Health and Function*, which emphasizes the role of the microbial engine in the global ocean food web; *Our Changing Planet*, which emphasizes the role of the ocean in global ecosystem health and climate change; and *The Ocean's Potential*, which emphasizes the genetic basis of the ocean's role as a global life support system. Our scientists are creative and collaborative. Our work is transformative and relevant. We are a dynamic institution, constantly striving to translate successful research into commercial ventures.

Bigelow Laboratory has in place several "Impact Centers" to, in part, stimulate the translation of cutting-edge transformative research to commercial success. The *Center for Seafood Solutions*, for

example, is a diverse coalition of global seafood economy stakeholders working collaboratively to identify, develop, and deploy transformative industry solutions through innovation. Through this Center, we are working with the right players in the seafood sector to put science to work for the betterment of our economy and society.

Bigelow Laboratory's Center for Seafood Solutions, which I mentioned earlier in this testimony, is engaged in several important initiatives, including one very relevant to the future of the global dairy industry and livestock agriculture more broadly. The *Coast-Cow-Consumer (C3)* project, as it is known, seeks to harness the beneficial qualities of seaweed and microalgae to enhance animal feed and improve environmental sustainability of dairy farming. This research and its successful application within the marketplace will prove valuable to Maine dairies and livestock producers across the globe. Producers are under increasing pressure from the food industry, consumers, and government regulators to show data-driven environmental improvements.

Bigelow Laboratory is heavily invested in the C3 project. We are seeing tremendous positive results specifically in the reduction of methane from dairy cattle. Our research is so promising that interest is growing rapidly from investors, as well as seaweed processing and global animal feed companies. To date, we have secured more than \$25 million in public and private financing. This is money coming to Maine to conduct transformative research and build an innovative new industry centered on our state's unique expertise in ocean science and agriculture. We believe the C3 project will bring economic opportunity to Maine by increasing value for Maine grown meat and dairy products, creating new market pathways for Maine seaweed farmers, and enhancing Maine's successful animal health and burgeoning biotechnology sectors.

The Maine Dairy Industry Association and individual farm families are active contributors within the C3 project and the Center for Seafood Solutions overall. We support their efforts to enhance market stability and predictability within the dairy industry through the Maine Dairy Stabilization Program. The safety net created by this program keeps Maine's dairies competitive and thriving when market volatility increases. A strong Maine dairy sector benefits all of us – from the farm to the grocery store to the science lab.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions about our support for this legislation or the animal feed innovation research project that will benefit Maine's economy.