

February 2, 2024

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

Gold Top Farm in Knox has been producing milk for 5 generations. The State of Maine's TIER Milk Program has been a tremendous help to the farm.

The TIER Milk Program has helped us be able to continue farming. Our biggest obstacle in farming is trying to pay all our expenses. It has been especially hard in a time where inflation is far outpacing the price of milk.

The biggest expenses on the farm are employee wages, (which is true for most organizations,) feed (grain) and fuel. We are in total agreement the minimum wage needs to increase to stay in line with the increase in the cost of living. Every time we have an increase in minimum wages we also have an increase in all employee taxes, workers compensation, etc. We currently have 15 employees. These people help support local area businesses.

We also see the impact of inflation every week with our grain prices. Over the past few years we have seen our weekly grain bill go from approximately \$9,000 a week to more than \$15,000 a week. This is also true for fuel. Hauling our milk to the dairy has increased over the past few years. We are paying higher prices for diesel. This is a year-round expense and especially high in the Spring, Summer and Fall when doing the field work.

We have a very tight budget with no room for unexpected expenses. We rely heavily on the TIER Milk Program helping us try to meet these expenses each month.

Sincerely,

Gregory Ingraham

Gregory Ingraham
Gold Top Farm