



**Androscoggin Valley Soil & Water Conservation District**  
*Making Conservation Work for You*

Testimony from Emma Lorusso and the Androscoggin Valley Soil & Water Conservation District

to the Joint Select Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

WRITTEN TESTIMONY PROVIDED IN FAVOR OF LD # 2053

**“AN ACT TO EXEMPT BUILDINGS USED TO CULTIVATE CROPS FROM THE MAINE UNIFORM BUILDING AND ENERGY CODE”**

**Date of Hearing: January 22, 2024**

Honorable Senator Beebe-Center, Honorable Representative Salisbury, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,

My name is Emma Lorusso, I am the Project Director at the Androscoggin Valley Soil & Water Conservation District in Lewiston. Thank you for your time and consideration of LD 2053 which would have the capacity to impact our constituents across Androscoggin and Sagadahoc counties, as well as homeowners across the state by enabling them to grow their own food and allowing farmers to expand their agricultural production regardless of their town’s population.

Hoop houses and greenhouses currently do not meet the structural and snow load requirements of the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code (MUBEC). This means that in communities over 4,000 people, homeowners are prohibited from erecting these structures. An exemption for these structures already exists, when they are used to house livestock or *storing* harvested crops, indicating that the state already recognizes that these structures present little risk if the snow or wind damages them.

Access to healthy local food is becoming increasingly important to Mainers, and hoop houses and greenhouses allow the capacity for homeowners and farmers to grow food for longer than our short growing season in the state. At the center of our District is Lewiston/Auburn, an urban area in need of more local growers. We believe that LD2053 will give more local homeowners and local farmers access to provide healthy food year-round to our community.

Sincerely,

Emma Lorusso, Project Director

Androscoggin Valley Soil & Water Conservation District