



**Testimony of Behalf of the University of Maine System**  
**Presented by Hannah Carter, Dean of University of Maine Cooperative Extension**  
**In Support of LD 1429, *An Act to Implement the Most Time-Sensitive***  
***Recommendations of the Maine Climate Council - May 17, 2021***

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources: My name is Hannah Carter. I am Dean of University of Maine Cooperative Extension and I was one of the more than two dozen university volunteers who provided scientific and technical expertise through service on the Maine Climate Council or its subcommittees, in my case as a member of the Natural and Working Lands (NWL) Work Group.

I am writing today on behalf of UMaine Extension and the University of Maine System to support the provision of this legislation that provides funding to establish us as a coordinating hub for directly supporting Maine's farming and forestry industries as they innovate for the future. Through this hub, we can provide research, development and technical assistance to the state's natural-resource businesses and industries that allows them to implement climate-friendly practices and take advantage of their strengths, our knowledge and new market opportunities.

The recommendation for the university to become this hub came from the NWL work group and was included in the Maine Can't Wait climate action plan. I want to thank Rep. Dunphy for bringing it forward here and the State for continuing to collaborate with us to develop this concept. As Maine's land grant university and the state's only public research university, UMaine is uniquely situated to serve in this role as we have been working to connect education, research and innovation to grow our heritage industries since our founding in 1865. Our faculty, staff and students are doing much of this work connected to the hub concept already, but this investment would help create a coordinated center to best leverage that work for the benefit of Maine's economy and environment, supporting interdisciplinary collaborations and providing a central point through which we can bring research and support services to businesses, communities and individuals. We see the concept of a climate coordinating center as so critical that we did submit it as a Community Funded Project request to Maine's Congressional delegation, and Rep. Pingree has already agreed to move it forward. Given this, we are comfortable with you carrying-over this portion of the legislation until we know more about whether we will ultimately secure the needed funding.

Additionally, I wanted to briefly share the System's experiences leading the way in institutional local food procurement, which this bill promotes. In 2016, the UMS set a bold goal that by 2020, 20% of our food would be purchased from within 175 miles of our campuses. Our decision to use distance rather than state boundaries to define local allowed us to offer the highest quality and diversity of food and drink year-round while preventing punitive retaliation that could limit Maine producers or put us at odds with a prohibition on geographic preference in federally funded purchasing.

We're proud that even before 2020, we exceeded our goal, and in a typical year, put more

than \$1 million into the local food economy and directly support more than 150 Maine farmers and producers. The UMS was able to achieve this in large part through aggressive recruitment of farmers and distributors, including establishing a new food aggregator in my native hometown of Caribou. We encourage policymakers and Maine schools to see the UMS and Extension as a resource and partner when implementing the local food provisions of this bill.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued commitment to University of Maine Cooperative Extension and to Maine's public universities. Please let me know if I can provide additional information prior to your work session.