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## MOFGA Testimony In Support Of

LD 1009 - *An Act Regarding the Reduction and Recycling of Food Waste*

April 6, 2023

Dear Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

I am writing belatedly to add support from the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) to LD 1009 - *An Act Regarding the Reduction and Recycling of Food Waste*. A broad-based community, MOFGA is creating a food system that is healthy and fair for all of us. Through education, training and advocacy, we are helping farmers thrive, making more local, organic food available and building sustainable communities. MOFGA certifies 535 organic farms and processing operations representing roughly \$90 million in sales and we are working hard to create opportunities for Maine's next generation of farmers.

This bill aligns with Maine's effort to address the problem of food hunger, and tackles the shameful problem of edible food going to landfills for many reasons including to arbitrary "sell by" dates. Maine has a serious problem with food insecurity with one out of ten people struggling with hunger, and much of that hunger could be alleviated by better stewardship of our food resources. According to the national non-profit organization ReFED, which is dedicated to ending food loss and waste across the U.S. food system, Maine wastes about a third (approximately 213,000 tons) of the food we produce at a value of \$1.27 billion. Almost all of that food (~97%) winds up in landfills where it produces methane gas, a known climate change contributor.

Landfilling food waste is heartbreaking to organic farmers and gardeners whose prime directive is "build the soil." Just as we need to rethink the ways that we grow and distribute our food to be in harmony with natural systems, we need to do way more steward the full life cycle of food. Data shows that we need a massive shift in public attitudes about food and we need to take action now. Many people argue that addressing the food waste problem should be voluntary. Volunteerism is not working and the clock is ticking loudly. This is an area where public policy is absolutely needed to force behaviors so that we can achieve a more sustainable food system. Just as Maine is taking bold action to plug the outlets for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, we need to stop the throwaway, single-use, convenience, out-of-sight out-of-mind approach to waste and urgently create infrastructure that allows Maine people to engage in food access and stewardship.

LD 1009 sets important goals for collecting edible food that would otherwise become solid waste and distributing the food to a hunger relief organization, food bank or pantry or other



recipient to be used for human consumption. This legislation establishes a decision tree for managing food scraps – first, minimizing waste at the point of generation, then directing edible food scraps to establishments that can use them for human consumption, then diverting scraps for agricultural use including for consumption by animals, then using food scraps for composting or anaerobic digestion for soil amendments, and finally subjecting the food scraps to anaerobic digestion not followed by soil application.

We appreciate that this bill provides thoughtful timelines for implementation of the policies. We recognize that without infrastructure in place, the legislation could present burdens for food producers and processors and we hope that the Committee will work to minimize that impact.

LD 1009 is a visionary piece of legislation that will provide important incentives to address food waste and hunger in Maine. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Heather Spalding  
MOFGA Deputy Director and Senior Policy Director

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*The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) started in 1971 and is the oldest and largest state organic organization in the country. We're a broad-based community that educates about and advocates for organic agriculture, illuminating its interdependence with a healthy environment, local food production, and thriving communities. We have 15,000 members, we certify more than 500 organic farms and processing facilities representing \$90 million in sales, and we are working hard to provide training and create opportunities for Maine's next generation of farmers. Each of these farmers is a Maine businessperson for whom economic health and environmental health are interdependent. While MOFGA envisions a future of healthy ecosystems, communities, people and economies sustained by the practices of organic agriculture, we attribute our success to collaboration and outreach to growers across the management spectrum.*