

My name is Libby Bleakney. I am one of 4 owners of Highland Dairy, LLC. The current 4 owners are the 5th generation to continuously farm here. Currently we have 4 of the sixth generation working on the farm.

Highland Farms is the oldest registered Jersey herd in the country. The farm was established in 1886. It is located on a hilltop in Cornish. We milk 250 registered Jerseys and have 250 head of youngstock. We plant 180 acres of corn for silage and we have 170 acres of grassland which we use for haylage. Weather depending we harvest the grassland 3 to 4 times per year.

We have 10 people working on the farm. Four are part-time. The 6 full-time employees include 2 owners. Of the other 4 full-time employees, 3 work significant over-time hours, to get all of the work done.

We produce 4 million pounds of high quality milk for Agri-mark / Cabot, of which we are a cooperative member farm. Agri-mark has very high quality standards and we pride ourselves at meeting their requirements.

I am very concerned about the current proposed bills, LD 1022 and LD151. LD 151 is not as much of a concern for our farm because we are primarily family. Only 2 non-family members are working for us.

LD1022 is a big concern for us. As a dairy farmer we have no control over the price that we get paid for our product, raw milk. We have no control over continually increasing expenses. These expenses include electricity, wages, feed, seed, fertilizer and insurance costs. With the proposed LD1022 the possibility of having to pay employees overtime pay. The price that we receive for our milk is out of our control as it is set by the Federal Market. Milk prices change monthly and we have no way to plan for our expenses until the monthly milk check arrives. Dairy farmers are constantly being squeezed between rising expenses and declining milk prices. Also quotas and penalties imposed for oversupplying.

Using last year's payroll records I figure that the farm would have to generate an additional \$55,215 more per year if we were required to start paying overtime. Being on a quota system, it is impossible to produce the extra 269,341 pounds of milk to raise enough money to cover the overtime expense.

We own 1,250 acres of land which we share with the public for use in hunting, fishing, hiking, cross country skiing and snowmobiling. We like offering this service to our community to enjoy the open space and splendid views of Mt. Washington and the White Mountain Presidential range.

As the numbers Dairy Farms continue to decline from economic pressures in the State of Maine I strongly feel that bill LD1022 would further push dairy farmers out of business. Our business is very different from other businesses since we cannot set the price for our product or have the ability to pass costs on to others.

Please consider how this bill will impact a very important section of agriculture in this state. Thank-you for your time and interest in dairying in the state of Maine.

