



April 12, 2021

Dear Members of the Labor and Housing Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to express our thoughts about **LD 1279, An Act To Increase the Minimum Wage**. We are generally supportive of this measure but believe it is wisest to raise the hourly minimum wage to \$15, then switchover to cost-of-living increases.

We are a two-generation family farm in Aroostook County which has been farming organically for 45 years . We raise Maine Certified Seed Potatoes and for over thirty years have sold them directly to home gardeners and market farmers via a mail order catalog and more recently our web-based seed business (www.woodprairie.organic). Because of the nature of our seed business we fall under Minimum Wage and Overtime provisions. At this time of year we are at peak shipping of seed and employ 12-15 people.

Our experience is that the stepped approach of increasing minimum wage by one dollar a year has been workable, particularly for adult workers. Paying overtime after forty hours during the rush seasons of harvest and planting has been more difficult. Also, paying youth possessing minimal work experience creates another challenge. However, in light of the real cost of living, on the whole it is reasonable for workers to get on track for earning a minimum of \$15/hour.

Recognizing the differences between urban and rural Maine, we believe \$15 establishes a sound level, but that \$16 would be overreach, especially for rural Maine. **That said, we support LD 1279.**

Thanks you for your consideration.

Caleb & Jim Gerritsen

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