

**Testimony of Donald E. Flannery, Executive Director, Maine Potato Board to the
Committee on Environment and Natural Resources**

March 18, 2024

**LD 1960 - An Act to Support Farming in Maine by Excluding Certain
Agricultural Products from the Law Governing the Presence of
Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances in Products**

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich and other members of the Environment and Natural Resource Committee I am Donald Flannery, Executive Director of the Maine Potato Board here to today to speak in support of LD 1960. We would like to thank Senator Jackson for sponsoring LD 1960 and the ENR Committee for hearing this bill.

The Maine Potato Board (MPB) was created in 1986 by an act of the Maine Legislature for the purpose of establishing a cohesive framework for effective leadership within the potato industry. The mission of the MPB is to provide a competitive environment for Maine's potato growers, processors, and dealers, and to create both stability and the infrastructure for future growth. Today the MPB represents 252 growers, 23 dealers, and 4 processors.

Our support of LD 1960 is not only on behalf of the potato industry but much of agriculture in Maine. While agriculture may not have the visible economic impact of other industries in Maine, the impact is meaningful and particularly in the rural areas of the State of Maine. According to USDA the economic impact of agriculture in Maine is \$2.9 billion and supports 17,026 jobs for Maine residents. The potato industry's share of this impact is \$1.3 billion, 6,570 jobs generating \$237 million of income for employees in this state. These numbers are only for the actual production of agricultural crops, when the valued-added impact is taken into account the overall economic impact of agricultural in Maine is over \$11 billion supporting 27,000 jobs none of which happens without the actual production of the crops.

LD 1960 would allow for the exemption of notification of agricultural products with an intended used for the production and protection of crops grown in Maine if they are regulated by or under the jurisdiction of: The United State Food and Drug Administration; The United States Department of Agriculture; or The United State Environmental Protection Agency pursuant to the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). The products used for production and protection of crops in Maine are all approved and licensed by EPA under FIFRA, so having this exemption would not mean that there would be no oversight or regulation on these products, it would eliminate the additional notification in Maine.

Currently all crop protectants used in Maine for agriculture production must be registered with Maine's Board of Pesticide Controls (BPC); the exemption proposed in LD 1960 would not change the registration of products with the BPC. The exemption for agriculture in LD 1960 is virtually the same as the ENR Committee has been discussing

related to veterinary products.

We understand the concern with PFAS in our environment and support the comprehensive and scientific work that is being done on removing PFAS from the environment. The research relating to the effects, control and replacement of PFAS is evolving but it will take time for all of this to happen. During this period, we must realize that while doing what we can to eliminate PFAS, we also have to continue to allow businesses and industry to move forward. LD 1960 will allow us to continue to use the regulated products we have; without this there is risk of losing products, which will have a negative impact on our ability to grow and protect our crops.

The impact of PFAS on farmland in Maine is not from the application of the agricultural products included in LD 1960 but from the approved and recommended application of sludge at very high levels. The products used for the growing and protection of agriculture crops in Maine are applied at a rate of ounces per acre with the number applications limited by the regulatory agency (EPA). Following Integrated Pest Management Practices (IPM); we can't risk losing any of the tools in our tool box for the protection of our crops, the most important aspect to IPM is scout and spray only when needed. Another key element is to target the best chemistry to the need and don't use more of any one chemistry than necessary to avoid resistance.

We ask that you support LD 1960 which will allow agricultural producers in Maine to remain sustainable during the period when research will lead us to a time when PFAS will no longer be part of the products we use. Thank you for your time and I will be happy to answer any questions today or during the work session.