

MAINE: WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT on LD 725 to protect Maine's FOOD and WATER - HEARING ON APRIL10!

The public hearing on LD 725 An Act to Recognize Local Control Regarding Food and Water Systems is scheduled for April 10th, Monday, at 10:00 am in Rm. 214 of the Cross Office Building.

This bill authorizes municipalities to regulate local food systems and the commercial transport of water by ordinance and requires the State to recognize such ordinances.

Written testimony can be addressed and submitted by Monday, April 10 to the State and Local Government Committee and sent to the clerk, Rebecca Harvey:

Rebecca.Harvey@Legislature.Maine.gov Remember to cc your representative and senator.

(See list of Committee members and PLEASE reach out to them additionally if you are a constituent of any of the committee members!)

<http://legislature.maine.gov/committee/#Committees/SLG>

Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government:

Senator Paul T. Davis, Sr. (R-Piscataquis), Chair

Senator Lisa Keim (R-Oxford)

Senator Susan A. Deschambault (D-York)

Representative Roland Danny Martin (D-Sinclair), Chair

Representative Mark E. Bryant (D-Windham)

Representative Pinny Beebe-Center (D-Rockland)

Representative George W. Hogan (D-Old Orchard Beach)

Representative John E. Madigan, Jr. (D-Rumford)

Representative John Alden Spear (D-South Thomaston)

Representative Richard A. Pickett (R-Dixfield)*

Representative Matthew A. Harrington (R-Sanford)

Representative Lester S. Ordway (R-Standish)

Representative Chad Wayne Grignon (R-Athens)

For info. on how to offer testimony in person:

<https://legislature.maine.gov/house/testify.htm>

Briefly, you should limit your remarks to 3 minutes (a little more than 1 written page). If there is a crowd waiting to testify, the committee chair will keep you to the time limit. Please prepare 20 copies in advance to distribute to the members of the committee.

"When, in some obscure country town, the farmers come together to a special town meeting, to express their opinion on some subject which is vexing to the land, that, I think, is the true Congress, and the most respectable one that is ever assembled in the United States." --Henry David Thoreau

FACT SHEET ON LD 725: AN ACT TO RECOGNIZE LOCAL CONTROL OF FOOD AND WATER SYSTEMS:

We asked Local Food Rules members & Community Water Justice to help explain what LD 725 is all about. Here are some of the answers.

What does LD 725 do?

LD 725 will ensure that the state recognizes our municipal authority to regulate our local food and water systems. It aims to protect our communities' ability to regulate the commercial transport of water outside of our communities, and to regulate our local food systems.

This legislation provides communities leverage against the overwhelming monetary advantage possessed by international corporations with lobbying power in our state and federal legislatures.

This puts the decision-making power in the hands of people, not corporations. The people most affected by rule-making, policies and laws need to be part of crafting them.

Increasingly, across Maine, towns and cities are standing up to ensure that we have a voice in deciding how our food needs are met and how our water is stewarded. This bill is about stewardship and community self-determination.

Why is LD 725 necessary?

Water is Life. Water is regional, as well as a local resource and, unlike a forest or surface crop, the resource is not confined within the metes and bounds any single property. Our rural communities need leverage and a stronger voice in decision-making regarding the regulation of water extraction.

We are experiencing more extreme storms, longer periods of drought, and changes in our snow load that change the systems on which we depend to live. To address these challenges, towns and cities can move quickly and be adaptable to regulate the best use of water resources in case of shortage or drought.

Food is Life. Empowered communities all over the state are working together to advance local food systems to ensure health and dignity for Maine people. State recognition of local authority will enable more resilient, flexible, adaptable policy to flourish without the threat of state preemption. Food sovereignty means that people who grow food and people who eat food have control over their lands, water, seeds, and livelihoods.

Current food and farming policy in Maine doesn't address who is driving or controlling the global food system or the lack of decision-making power among people to decide what food system they want.

Unlike micro-breweries, the commercial transport of water externalizes profit and economic benefit *away from* our communities and the scale of extraction may be disproportionate to the resource and the municipal economic benefit. Keeping one level of regulation local to municipalities maintains our rural communities' access to beneficial policy at the level closest to us.

The time has come to recognize local control of our most essential resources: food and water.

Why is LD 725 beneficial?

Protecting the water resources of a community ensures its ability to be viably self-sustaining.

LD 725 is necessary to activate Title 7, Section 201-A (passed in 2013), which declares that the state shall support policies that, "through local control, preserve the abilities of communities to produce, process, sell, purchase and consume locally produced foods." Despite this law, the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry does not recognize the local food ordinances adopted in 18 towns.

Will we always have water? We don't always have enough now. Why are the needs of every living being that requires water to survive not part of the policy equation? Yes, Maine has a lot of water--it's why we also have our beautiful landscape, abundant wildlife, and great capacity for food production in New England. We need the ability at the town level to regulate commercial water transport out of our towns and do what is best for our communities in Maine.

LD 725 is a way to ensure our communities will always have a means of protection and production; to meet our capacity in sustaining our local food systems, our environment and our bodies. It is imperative that our ability to determine where the fulcrum lies in the balance of water resource allocation; that it is in place and steadfast to detrimental prospects. We need to protect the value of our land and to be able to determine what is necessary for our local economy to grow in the ways that will best fit our way of life.

The local food ordinances now enacted in 18 towns in 7 counties across Maine have already begun to attract new residents and young families to our state. The local policies have created a positive reputation for Maine's support of small-scale, ecologically sound, diversified farms that people are moving to Maine because they know they will be in a supportive community. People like the young Canino family from Sedgwick, and the Felger family from Penobscot and the DeGoosh/Isham family from Sangerville. See related stories:

On Steve DeGoosh & Brook Isham:

<http://bangordailynews.com/2017/02/13/homestead/bunker-style-home-built-by-survivalists-the-perfect-fit-for-sustainable-duo/>

On the Felger family:

<http://www.ellsworthamerican.com/living/penobscot-couple-specialize-native-organic-seedlings/>

Eighteen towns that have adopted the Local Food & Community Self-Governance Ordinance:

Sedgwick (Hancock)
Blue Hill (Hancock)
Penobscot (Hancock)
Brooksville (Hancock)
Trenton (Hancock)
Brooklin (Hancock)
Isle au Haut (Knox)
Hope (Knox)
Plymouth (Penobscot)
Livermore (Androscoggin)
Appleton (Knox)
Alexander (Washington)
Freedom (Waldo)
Liberty (Waldo)
Moscow (Somerset)
Bingham (Somerset)
Solon (Somerset)
Madison (Somerset)

The city of Rockland (Knox County) has passed a supportive resolution urging the state legislature to adopt legislation supportive of food sovereignty.

At least a half dozen more towns are considering adoption now.

