The 128th Legislature of the State of Maine  
State House  
Augusta, ME

Dear Honorable Members of the 128th Legislature:

Under the authority vested in me by Article IV, Part Third, Section 2 of the Constitution of the State of Maine, I am hereby vetoing LD 835, “An Act To Promote Small Diversified Farms and Small Food Producers.”

Contrary to the title, this bill alters definitions in state law, which will cause an unhealthy impact on Maine food production. Consumers and farmers will both be left wondering which items are really safe Maine food products. LD 835 is an effort to legislate an illusion that there is no need for food safety training and inspections. The overwhelming majority of Maine food producers and processors successfully use the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) licensing and educational expertise to improve the safety and value of their products.

To participate in the existing licensing process, food producers, especially new farmers and processors, work closely with the technical experts at DACF and the University of Maine Cooperative Extension to understand the chemical and biological hazards that surround food preparation. LD 835 allows a wide exemption to safe food inspections.

Passage of this bill adds a tracking requirement for DACF professional staff to trace which producers are not required to meet state food safety standards based on farm location, point of sale and volume of product. Rather than ensuring safe food for all consumers, DACF would have to determine who must meet safe food license requirements and who is not required to produce food following food safety procedures.

Currently the Center for Disease Control is investigating multiple outbreaks of salmonella that have sickened 400 people. The most common cause is lack of safe procedures for handling backyard chickens, chicks and eggs. These same foods are specifically exempted within the proposed legislation. The Center for Disease Control warns that just looking healthy “does not reveal whether or not products contain salmonella.”

Eliminating responsibility for food safety without any requirement for standards equal to known safety tolerance is dangerous to consumers, a risky burden to towns and potentially devastating to food producers who sell hazardous food.

For these reasons, I return LD 835 unsigned and vetoed. I strongly urge the Legislature to sustain it.

Sincerely,

[signature]
Paul R. LePage
Governor