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STATE OF MAINE
ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY

TO: Senator Nathan L. Libby, Senate Chair
Representative Genevieve McDonald, House Chair
Government Oversight Committee
FROM: Senator Jim Dill, Senate Chair *JD KW*
Representative Margaret M. O'Neil, House Chair *mmo kw*
Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
DATE: May 13, 2021
SUBJ: Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine

As you know, on March 5, 2021, the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (ACF) Committee received a memo from you requesting our assistance and input regarding a potential review of the Wild Blueberry Commission. The ACF Committee held a public meeting on April 13, 2021 for this purpose. The meeting included a discussion with legislators from the Washington County delegation - Senator Marianne Moore and Representatives William Tuell, Robert Alley and Anne Perry. The meeting also included a briefing by Wild Blueberry Commission (WBC) Executive Director Eric Venturini and a listening session where we were able to hear directly from blueberry farmers.

The ACF Committee recommends that the Government Oversight Committee (GOC) revisit the original questions posed in a February 28, 2020 memo from the Washington County delegation. We also recommend that GOC move forward with your review of the WBC and encourage you to review the materials provided to us by the WBC (see attached) and others as that information may be helpful to you in your deliberations.

The ACF Committee also recognizes that there have been recent changes in the Commission's governing statutes and the composition of the Commission. Although, the statute was changed effective January 1, 2020, appointments to fill the two new grower seats were not completed until September 17, 2020. Additionally, the Commission's last executive director left the position in the spring of 2019 and the new director has been in his position for a little over one year (since February 10, 2020). We respectfully request that you give the WBC time to land on its feet and to report back to the ACF Committee during the Second Regular Session of the 130th Legislature on activities and accomplishments.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions. Thank you.

c: Members, Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
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