

February 27, 2015

Senator Collins, Representative McLean and members of the Transportation Committee:

My name is Jon Olson. I am the Executive Secretary of Maine Farm Bureau, the state's largest general farm organization.

Maine Farm Bureau is testifying in support of LD 284 – An Act To Amend the Law Concerning Overwidth Farm Tractors on Public Ways.

At the Penobscot County Farm Bureau Annual Meeting last October, it was brought to the attention of members an unclear section of Maine law dealing with farm tractors being driven on public ways.

Under current law (Sec. 1. 29-A MRS §2381, sub-§2-B) overwidth moving machines, light farm tractors or other lightweight farming vehicles and equipment not customarily operated over public ways may be driven on public ways if equipped with lights or reflectors in the front or rear warning other highway users of the extreme width.

A potato farmer driving a farm tractor hauling a disk harrow from one field to another, a distance of about one mile, was stopped by a State Trooper. The disk harrow at its widest part is 16 feet. The tractor at its widest part is 14 feet. Both the tractor and disk harrow had hazard lights, strobe lights and a slow-moving vehicle signs to warn other highway users. The State Trooper questioned whether the tractor met the definition of a "light" tractor. The State Trooper did not issue a summons or warning because of the vagueness of the definition of "light" tractor.

In my research of the law and communication with the Maine State Police, I can find no definition of "light" tractor. This presents an uncertainty for Maine farmers knowing what type of tractor they can drive on public ways. This bill resolves this issue by removing the term "light" so that any overwidth tractor may be driven on public ways.

Thank you for your attention to the above. I'll be happy to answer any questions you may have.