

*129th
Legislature
Of Maine*

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February 28, 2020

Senator Justin Chenette, Chair
Representative Anne-Marie Mastraccio, Chair
Government Oversight Committee
c/o Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability
82 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Senator Chenette, Representative Mastraccio, Distinguished Members of the Government Oversight Committee:

We are writing today to formally request a review of the Wild Blueberry Commission (WBC), its stewardship of state blueberry taxes earmarked for marketing, and its relationship to an industry marketing group, Wild Blueberries of North America (WBANA), following a mid-February meeting of the Washington County Legislative Delegation with small wild blueberry growers and harvesters in Washington County.

At that meeting, the growers, Courtney Hammond of Lynch Hill Farm and Greg Bridges of Calais expressed concern that neither the WBC nor WBANA are being transparent with the manner in which they handle state blueberry tax revenues, have established a complex and seemingly incestuous relationship to steer tax monies toward larger producers, and have resisted internal reform efforts.

Given the short nature of this current legislative session, the lack of clarity around the issues at hand, and the need for further investigation before submitting legislation, we would ask that you authorize a review of the operations of both entities – WBC and WBANA and issue a report within the calendar year. We also believe that submitting any legislation at this time is preemptory, and ill-advised, but that there are several key questions that must be answered.

These are as follows:

1. Where is the blueberry tax money going? Is the WBC using WBANA to steer it back to themselves and not for marketing?
2. Is the relationship between the industry, WBC and WBANA transparent? If not, what specific actions must be taken to ensure that business is conducted in the public realm?


3. Who provides oversight of both WBC and WBANA, and is oversight adequate?

In the coming months, we would ask that you investigate the above concerns and issue a report on your findings. With all of the problems facing the wild blueberry industry, members should have the fullest confidence that tax dollars raised and appropriated for its future success are fully transparent and wisely managed.

Thank you,



Senator Marianne Moore


Representative William Tuell


Representative Anne Perry


Representative Kathy Javner


Representative Robert Alley


Representative Rena Newell