

Testimony of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association
in support of LD 468 - An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents
Access Locally Produced Food

March 6, 2025

Good morning Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the joint standing committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. My name is Madi Whaley, and I am the Educational Programs Coordinator at the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA). Today, I am speaking in support of LD 468 - An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food.

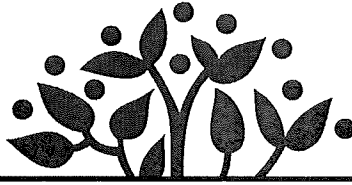
MOFGA's mission is to transform our food system by supporting farmers, empowering people to feed their communities, and advocating for an organic future. Expanding access to locally-grown foods is a vital component of this mission, which is why we stand behind this bill.

As part of the Maine Local Food Access Network, which includes the Maine Federation of Farmers Markets, Good Shepherd Food Bank, Cultivating Community, St. Mary's Nutrition Center, MOFGA, and other partners across Maine, MOFGA administers the CSA portion of Maine Harvest Bucks. We work with 14 CSA farms across Maine and are excited to work with one (1) farm aggregator beginning this season. With the 1:1 SNAP and Maine Harvest Bucks match, SNAP shoppers can purchase CSA shares at 50% of the normal cost.

CSA members who pay with SNAP and Maine Harvest Bucks receive regular (weekly or monthly) access to fresh produce, and in some cases, other locally produced foods or locally grown, fruit-bearing seedlings. The CSA model provides a measure of assured income for farmers throughout the season, and the CSA portion of the Maine Harvest Bucks program makes participating in a CSA more possible for SNAP shoppers. In 2024, over 80 SNAP households participated in the CSA portion of this program, resulting in over \$45,000 in Maine Harvest Bucks and SNAP, combined, going to support local farms. Across the Maine Harvest Bucks and Farm Fresh Rewards programs, we see Maine residents gaining dignified access to local foods, and we see funds going back into the Maine economy through local farms.

LD 468 would double the allotment of nutrition incentive funds currently allocated per the governor's budget. We are grateful for the funds currently provided. The additional state funding that this bill proposes would allow us to secure more funding from the





USDA as well, and ultimately, to bring on new participating farms and stores, and reach more Maine residents.

Increased ongoing funding is essential for this program, and the participants, farms, and local economies that benefit from it. With this in mind, I advocate for the committee to vote unanimously in favor of LD 468 – An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food.

Thank you.