



Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Ending Hunger by 2030 Advisory Group
January 18, 2022, Submitted in writing

Senator Dill, Representative O’Neil and Members of the Committee:

I am Rev. Jane Field, Executive Director of the Maine Council of Churches. We have seven member-denominations who represent 437 local congregations with 55,000 members across the state. I am testifying on behalf of the Council **in support of LD 174.**

In our organization’s mission statement, we describe ourselves as “rooted in Hebrew and Christian scripture.” In those sacred texts, the message is clear: we are called to rebuild, restore, and renew all that is broken. Love of neighbor compels us to work to end the brokenness of hunger by acting with and for the hungry and those experiencing food insecurity. That’s why a top priority in our Council’s Moral Agenda is “the elimination of hunger...and enactment of policies benefiting the most vulnerable.” In that document, we call on our legislators to join us in holding fast to the vision of a society that ensures that every child of God has equal access to the basics, including nutritious and affordable food.

We applaud the work of the Advisory Group in part because of the way in which it centered the voices of Mainers who have first-hand experience of hunger and food insecurity and provided ways for stakeholders to collaborate with those who are directly impacted. And we know that there are so many here in Maine directly impacted—Maine ranks fifth in the nation for food insecurity and the pandemic has only worsened conditions for those struggling to put food on their family’s table. We see them every single day in our churches’ food pantries, soup kitchens and community meal programs.

But church-run programs like these aren’t the systemic solution needed to solve this problem—they provide emergency relief, not structural change. The recommendations that would be implemented if LD 174 passes address the root causes of hunger and provide sustainable and equitable solutions to our state’s hunger crisis.

By investing in these recommendations, we in Maine have the opportunity to move forward on a path toward ending hunger here by 2030. For this reason, the Maine Council of Churches urges you to vote Ought To Pass on LD 174.