

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and honorable members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, I am Gus La Casse, and I am a fourth-year University of Maine student from Trenton. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify in support of **LD 1009: An Act Regarding the Reduction and Recycling of Food Waste.**

Maine has a special relationship to food. From having a strong tradition of regional food ways and being known around the world for the food we produce, to having a constitutional right to it, this bill provides Maine the opportunity to ensure that we use food to nourish our food insecure neighbors, and to ensure that waste is disposed of properly. At a young age, my family and I would volunteer for the annual Spring Fest, an event put on by Sr. Lucille MacDonald and the Emmaus Shelter in Ellsworth. Although I was young at the time, this experience implanted the importance of food in communities, food security. It is an incredible honor and duty to advocate to ensure that our neighbors are fed.

In this brief testimony, I would like to focus on two reasons why this bill deserves passage; its impact on food insecurity in Maine, and its impact on our environment. The timeliness of this bill cannot be overstated. One in six Maine residents are food insecure, and over 100,000 Mainers have been impacted by the recent reduction of SNAP benefits, causing an increase in demand at food pantries around the State. **LD 1009** does the important work of ensuring that surplus food makes its way to food pantries, and that Maine puts a greater emphasis on food rescue in future years.

The environmental impact of food waste on Maine also deserves consideration. A quarter of the waste that creates American landfills is food, the biggest contributor to Maine landfills is food. Food waste is also responsible for eight percent of global emissions of greenhouse gases, and when put into landfills generates methane, a greenhouse gas that is twenty-five times more potent than carbon dioxide. This bill would not only implement a regime that would stop food waste ending up in landfills, but would also ensure anaerobic digestion is the last possible resort for food waste. More pointedly, this would ensure that the breakdown of food waste would see produce biogas, digestate, or water as opposed to methane. In the rollout of **LD 1009: An Act Regarding the Reduction and Recycling of Food Waste**, responsibility will be required of those who produce the most food scraps, acknowledging that those who have the means to adequately deal with food scraps on a large scale should be the first to do so.

If this bill passes, Maine would become one of ten states in the country to ensure that food waste and surplus food does not end up in landfills, further demonstrate our commitment to a clean and prosperous future, and advocate for the best interests of all Mainers. As well, Trenton can be proud to see that our voices in Augusta are ardent supporters of protecting Maine's environmental and food security. I urge this honorable committee to support the passage of **LD 1009: An Act Regarding the Reduction and Recycling of Food Waste.**