

Lorelei Cimeno
Orland
LD 1584

Honorable members of the Health and Human Services Committee: My name is Lorelei Cimeno, and I am a resident and farmer in Orland, Maine. I am testifying today to urge you to support LD 1584. I am sure you have heard from many people today about the dire need in our communities for the extension of emergency allotments of SNAP benefits. It is important to remember that the benefits of SNAP are not just felt by SNAP recipients. SNAP dollars are a great boost to the economy in Maine, and it's even better when those dollars are spent locally. I am the organizer of the Blue Hill Farmers' Market. We implemented SNAP acceptance at our market in 2022. We were pleasantly surprised at the popularity of the new program. Clearly, there is a great need for SNAP acceptance to purchase local food in our rural area. Shoppers that use SNAP are able to stretch their dollars at the market through a program called Maine Harvest Bucks (MHB). The program matches their SNAP dollars 2 to 1 in MHB, which can be used to buy fruits, vegetables, and seedlings at the market. SNAP acceptance and Maine Harvest Bucks is a great way to diversify the customer base at the farmers' market, make the market and the local food more accessible to the entire community, and help farmers. Our sales in 2022 were greatly increased by the acceptance of SNAP and MHB. I worry that if the emergency allotments of SNAP are not extended, that fewer shoppers that use SNAP will visit us at the market. Inflation is not letting up, and wages just don't seem to be increasing at the same rate as inflation. Please consider how SNAP helps Maine farmers as well as SNAP recipients, and support LD 1584.