

Erica Haywood
Farmington, Maine
LD 1584

Good afternoon, esteemed committee chairpersons and members,
My name is Erica Haywood. I am a member of and have served as the manager of the Farmington Farmers' Market Association. I am also a Master Gardener and involved with the Master Food Preservers programs with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension. As a nursery owner, a farmer, and apothecary shop owner I provide plants, medicine, and food for my community. I run a community garden at my farm to give local people access to land upon which to grow their own food as well.
This bill, LD 1584, will help the SNAP program recipients in our community by restoring some of their benefits to access local, fresh, healthy foods. Every day at market and at my own farm and shop I talk with people for whom local farms are a literal lifeline. SNAP benefits feed hungry families in ways that our local food security systems including gleaning projects, community kitchens, and food pantries can't address alone. It gives dignity to our neighbors experiencing food insecurity to be able to shop at any store or farmers market with their SNAP benefits on a discreet EBT card. At our market info booth, we welcome all shoppers by greeting them with the phrase "Are you a card shopper or a cash shopper today?" This means people shopping with credit cards are using the same clipboards as people with EBT cards and SNAP benefits in order to browse each booth to make their selections. Market vendors and farmers like me love the clipboard system because we sell more food when the info booth is up and running and we can process cards for all of our potential customers. The numbers from the transactions processed at our market info booth support the assertion that the SNAP program absolutely helps create equal access to local healthy foods from local farmers and food makers in our community. I know people with SNAP benefits who have had to reduce the amount of local healthy foods they can access at market because of the recent reduction in benefits due to reduced federal funding. Please help us continue to help our neighbors access locally-grown and locally-made healthy foods at our farmers markets by passing LD 1584, providing emergency funding from our state funds to this program. Thank-you.