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Testimony of the Office for Family Independence
Department of Health and Human Services

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

In Opposition to LD 1584 *An Act to Provide Funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to Temporarily Restore Benefits Being Reduced by the Federal Government*

Hearing Date: May 1, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Anthony Pelotte, and I serve as Director of the Office for Family Independence (OFI) in the Department of Health and Human Services. I appreciate the opportunity to present testimony on LD 1584, *An Act to Provide Funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to Temporarily Restore Benefits Being Reduced by the Federal Government*.

This bill proposes use of over 50 million dollars in General Fund over a six-month period to ease the effect of the end of federal funding, as a result of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023¹, which was used to provide emergency maximum SNAP benefits during the National Public Health Emergency.

The Department is committed to our role in reducing food insecurity and improving the health of people in Maine, and we do not take it lightly. Unfortunately, it is not feasible for OFI to implement these expanded, state-funded benefits during the period they are intended to cover. For this reason, OFI respectfully objects to the passage of LD 1584.

The stated purpose of the bill is to continue emergency SNAP benefits for six months, starting in March, while gradually decreasing in amount to provide recipients the opportunity to adjust to a lower level of benefits. However, considering it is now May, the timeline provided in the bill and the logistical considerations of the time needed to train individuals, to update technology, and to implement these benefits is unfortunately unattainable.

The last month of federally funded SNAP emergency benefits was February 2023. Recipient households have received their budgeted normal benefit amounts for March and April 2023 and have started to adjust to these new benefit levels. In anticipation and response to the impact this change would have on families, the Department has compiled and shared information around

¹ See [Pub. L. 117-164](#) § 503(b)

existing nutritional supports that can help ease families' transition to their budgeted regular SNAP benefit amount.²

Maine has other nutritional supports, including the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program, and access to universal free school lunches, that are assisting families in their transition. Additionally, OFI and Maine's Department of Education (MDOE) continue to work to issue Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) benefits to school aged children as well as children under age six receiving SNAP. MDOE and local school districts will also be offering summer meals programs. Finally, local food pantries and commodity programs are working hard to support older Mainers in need.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if further discussion would be helpful. Thank you for your time, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

² <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/blog/help-food-costs-extra-covid-snap-funds-end-2023-03-08>