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United Way
of Southern Maine



Senator Grohoski, Representative Perry, and honorable members of the Taxation Committee,

My name is Devon Stockmayer, and I am the Advocacy Supervisor at Preble Street working with the Maine Hunger Initiative. I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for and urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD1544: An Act to Improve Economic Security for Maine Children by Establishing the Maine Dependent Tax Credit.

In partnership with DoorDash, the Preble Street Food Security Hub (FSH) delivers food boxes to households across Southern Maine. Since the end of SNAP emergency allotments, we have seen a significant spike in the number of food box orders the FSH receives—as many as 200 more per month. We need to identify long-term policy solutions to relieve families of the stress of hunger and allow them the dignity of traveling to the grocery store or the farmer’s market to select food for their household. LD1544 provides a long-term tax solution to end food insecurity for families across Maine.

LD1544 will expand the dependent exemption tax credit for Maine families experiencing poverty. It is an opportunity to put money back in the pockets of households struggling to stay afloat, a credit that can be used to directly support children and offset household expenses in a time of high inflation. Busy parents and families should not worry about whether they can put meals on the table, and all Mainers deserve food security and freedom.

When you set food insecurity data in Maine against the dramatic impact of these tax credit payments, the numbers speak for themselves. Of the more than 571,000 households in Maine, 9.5% face hunger. Maine has long held the highest rates of childhood food insecurity in New England, with one in six children experiencing it. Yet federal monthly child tax credit payments during the pandemic lifted more than 10,000 children and their families out of poverty. While the expanded CTC during COVID reduced food insufficiency by 19% for families across the state, food insufficiency has increased by 25% since the end of the federal benefit.



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LD1544 is a chance to change this, to lend families a hand by giving them a tax credit for their children. The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy estimates that this tax credit could reduce child poverty in Maine by up to 12.3% — transforming the lives of 3,500 children. With a broad standard for qualifying, the credit proposed by LD1544 will reach low to middle-income families who often slip through the cracks in accessing these kinds of tax benefits but desperately need the help.

Healthy humans need nourishment, shelter, and stability — all severely threatened when households cannot make ends meet. An investment in Maine children is an investment in the future of Maine. I urge you to vote in support of LD1544. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Devon Stockmayer



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