



February 26, 2024

Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine testimony to the Committee On Appropriations and Financial Affairs in support of LD 2214, An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025.

Good afternoon Senator Rotundo, Senator Baldacci, Representative Sachs, Representative Meyer and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services Committees,

My name is Amy Gallant, and I am the Vice President of Public Policy for Good Shepherd Food Bank. I am here today to express our support for the proposed addition of 25 Eligibility Specialist positions, 3 Family Independence Unit Supervisor positions, and one Program Administrator Family Independence position in the Office for Family Independence. This can be found on page A-75/Section NN of the supplemental budget.

SNAP is the most effective safety net program to reduce hunger in Maine and nationwide. The incredible network of 600 food pantries across the state cannot meet the needs of food insecure Mainers in the same way that SNAP does. SNAP allows 170,000 Mainers in 90,000 households the dignity of purchasing their own food and boosts our local economy by generating revenue at grocery stores, farmers markets, and other food vendors.

We consider the staff at DHHS and OFI to be unsung heroes, moving through applications with efficiency and accuracy while adjusting to ever-changing state and federal requirements. SNAP applications are bottlenecked because of the understaffing at the Office of Family Independence. The proposed increase in staffing included in the supplemental budget would be a significant step towards alleviating the stress experienced by OFI staff and SNAP applicants, as well as the unnecessary burden on the charitable food system if more people are able to more quickly access SNAP benefits instead of their local pantry.

Please retain this proposed staffing in the budget. Thank you for considering our testimony.

Sincerely,

Amy Regan Gallant

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