

David Whittlesey
Brunswick
LD 468

Testimony of David Whittlesey of Brunswick before the 132nd Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.

Dear members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry.

My name is David Whittlesey, I am a resident of Brunswick, and I am here today as a consumer, a SNAP beneficiary, Member of the Merry Meeting Food Council, and regular shopper at farmers' markets in Brunswick and Bowdoinham, and to lend my support of LD 468 – An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food.

My wife and I, both retired live primarily on the fixed income provided by Social Security, a small pension and the RMD from a small IRA – the total below the line of eligibility for SNAP assistance. The value of the supplemental assistance provided by SNAP is almost doubled through using those benefits plus Maine Harvest Bucks at the farmers' markets for fruits and vegetables.

We are so fortunate to have a farming community that provides fresh produce year round, sustainably grown in the healthy Hadley Loam surrounding Merry Meeting Bay. It is not transported from California or Mexico or Texas. The supply chain from the soil to our dining table is short and reliable. The farmers that grow the food earn their livelihood and support their families from the food we consume. They are our neighbors, and they are our community.

My wife and I strongly urge you to maintain and expand the Maine Harvest Bucks program, to pass LD 468, to further strengthen our local food economy and increase the number of people eating healthy produce grown right here in town. This is a win-win situation that needs to be bolstered, not abandoned.

Thank you.