

Kim Schutsky
Wolf Pine Farm in Alfred, Maine
LD 468

Testimony for the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry in Support of LD 468 An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food - Sponsored by Senator Henry Ingwersen
March 6, 2025

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, my name is Kim Schutsky and I manage Wolf Pine Farm's involvement with Maine Harvest Bucks. I am a resident of Alfred, Maine. I am testifying here today to express my support of LD 468 – An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food.

Wolf Pine Farm is a MOFGA certified organic farm that specializes in the Community Supported Agriculture business model. The farm has been accepting SNAP as a payment method for at least thirteen years, and has been actively involved with the Maine Harvest Bucks (MHB) initiative since its creation and inception in 2015. Involvement with MHB from CSA members who pay with SNAP varies from year to year and from season to season. At our all-time high, 11% of our CSA members paid with SNAP funds and benefited from the MHB initiative (at that time, membership averaged 400 families).

MHB is a phenomenal program with a mindset and culture of collaboration, flexibility, and ease of use. It supports a networked group of interested and involved parties, from shoppers to farmers to farmers' markets to select retail spaces. From Wolf Pine Farm's perspective, it has been exciting to grow and change within the boundaries of the program as the farm's business has morphed throughout the years. The most recent example of Wolf Pine's flexibility and creativity within the MHB program is how the farm is able to offer physical Maine Harvest Bucks vouchers at a 1:1 match for SNAP purchases of the farm's meat shares. Those vouchers can then be spent anywhere within the state that accepts MHBs ... from another CSA to a farm stand to a farmers' market.

Within the program there is no competition - there is simply a genuine heart-felt desire to help any Mainer who receives SNAP have access to the glorious abundance of Maine's local food system. Maine Harvest Bucks offers shoppers and farmers extraordinary opportunities and it is crucial that funding for such a vital and impactful initiative stays strong. It is beyond important for the state of Maine to allocate additional funding toward this program.

I'd like to end by sharing a few sentiments from Wolf Pine Farm customers who have participated in the Maine Harvest Bucks program through the farm's CSA ...

*** "... this program of matching dollar for dollar is really incredible. If more people who use EBT could know how this works, more people could eat better (and ultimately in my dream world, average immunity/wellness would improve)..."

*** "Hi Kim - I want to thank you & your team for all of the amazing produce you supplied to me and other Mainers during the fall/winter season! As a Stage 4 cancer survivor living on a fixed income, my farm share has really helped me eat nutritious & delicious food while on a tight budget! Thanks a million!!!"

*** "The shares have been instrumental in transitioning our diet to organic and much healthier quality meats which is important for our health. The health of my family is something that I am taking very seriously in these crazy times we are living in. I've also decided that I want to support local farms the best I can and I'm trying to source the majority of my food from them instead of "local" grocery stores."

On behalf of all those involved with the Maine Harvest Bucks program, I thank you for supporting LD 468 - An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food.

With gratitude - Kim Schutsky for Wolf Pine Farm of Alfred, Maine