

Rachel Vallance
Rockland
LD 468

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

My name is Rachel Vallance I am a resident of Rockland, and I am here today farmers' market shopper to express my support of LD 468 – An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food.

My family is low income, and while I currently work two part time jobs and am self-employed, we rely on SNAP benefits while I care for two disabled family members. The matching funds for fresh fruit and vegetables and seedlings at our local farmers markets with harvest bucks program is the only way we can afford local healthy foods. Just last summer I was able to order flats of strawberries from Fairwinds Farms through the Brunswick market, for \$60 I got 16 overflowing quarts. My children ate many fresh with yogurt from Balfour Farms and we froze and made jam with the rest. At Rockland and Belfast markets we were able to purchase bulk greens and squash for soups, breads, and roasted dishes with rice. We rely on Whatley Farms in Topsham for their participation in Harvest Bucks to purchase herbs and garlic and tomato seedlings so we can grow and make our own sauce to feed us throughout the winter. While we could purchase canned or frozen vegetables and fruits, knowing where our food comes from and that we can support local farmers is vital to our Maine way of life. I will finish with sharing that without the matching harvest bucks and acceptance of SNAP benefits at farmers markets my family and many others would not know the gift of the community building and opportunity to learn about producing food and different ways to prepare it that comes from shopping at farmers markets, such as storytime and local musicians at the Rockland market in Harbor Park, the celebrations of the seasons at Pumpkin Vine in Somerville with goat hikes and vast picnic spaces, and the fun kids area with samples at the Damariscotta market where volunteers taught my sons about making kale salad he loves. Thank you for your support for funding programs that feed Maine families.