

Stephanie Grant
Washington
LD 468

Testimony of Steph Grant of Washington before the 132st 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 Steph Grant I am a resident of Washington, and I am here today as a Farmer to express my support of LD 468 – An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food.

Over the years I have vended at many markets around the state, the Bath Farmers Market in Bath, the Union Farms Market in Union, Pumpkin Vine Family Farm's Farmers Market in Somerville just to name a few and am currently doing the Rockland Farmers Market in Rockland. Most of these markets have been run fully by Volunteers, with only a handful having the ability to pay for an info booth person to handle the Harvest Bucks, Credit Cards and SNAP.

I have been lucky enough over the years to not only watch but experience first hand how much the Harvest Bucks program helps build up small communities. Harvest Bucks allows low income families to purchase healthy fruits and veggies from local farmers but they leave with so much more. These family come to markets and farm stand, they get to know their farmers, their neighbors and we get to know them. They come looking for food and leave as friends which helps strengthen our community.

My favorite example of how wide the impact of Harvest Buck is, is of a family in the next town over. They come to the market every week, rain or shine, to buy their groceries, something they would not be able to do with out Harvest Bucks. They know everyone by name, all the details about what's going on at whose farm, and we have watched these kids grow up over the past couple years. This family has become a part of our community, they are quick to step up when the market needs an extra set of hand, or a farmer need help, their oldest got their first job working for one of the farms who they became friends with through this market. A market they wouldn't have been able to go to if it wasn't for Harvest Bucks. Supporting the Continuous Funding at \$1.2 million level per year of the Harvest Bucks program not only puts food on people's tables but gives them a chance build a bigger better community and the opportunity for more stories like the one I shared. You do not get stories, support and community like this going to a grocery store or box store.

My testimony here is purely about how wonderful it is to see these people and families come to farmers markets and grow our community. My farm does not normally receive Harvest Bucks directly since they are specifically for Fruits and Veggies. That being said we are still affected as Harvest Bucks shoppers still need their staple foods that aren't necessarily covered by. The money that comes into the farmers stays in the community which in tern helps us all.

Thank you for listening to my story and I hope to see continuous funding at the \$1.2 million level per year to help feed people and grow our communities.