

Lorelei Cimeno
Orland, ME
LD 468

Testimony of Lorelei Cimeno of Orland 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 Lorelei Cimeno, and I urge support for LD 468 – An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food.

My farm, Rainbow Farm in Orland, participates in several local farmers' markets. They all have started to accept Maine Harvest Bucks within the last four years. The growth our markets have seen due to these programs is very encouraging. There are lots of new customers at the farmers' market, which increases sales for the small businesses in the market.

The rich agricultural land in Maine gives our State the potential to become the breadbasket of New England. In order for Maine farms to thrive, we need to make Maine grown food accessible to all Mainers. Maine Harvest Bucks is an essential piece of that growth. It increases the number of customers at our markets, and support for our small farm.

I am the market manager of the Blue Hill Farmers' Market. Like all the market's we participate in, Blue Hill is volunteer run. We also rely on volunteers to run our info booth to accept SNAP payments and distribute Maine Harvest Bucks. I am also on the board of the Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets (MFFM). MFFM works very hard to secure funding for Maine Harvest Bucks with grants and advocacy. LD 468 would strengthen the food access programs at the farmers' markets by covering costs for MFFM and our info booths. Continuous funding of \$1.2 million per year would ensure that MFFM could reliably fund Maine Harvest Bucks.

Thank you for your time on this important matter.