

Janelle Plummer
West Paris
LD 468

Testimony of Janelle Plummer of West Paris 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 Janelle Plummer, I am a resident of West Paris, and I am here today as a farm owner and operator, and eater, to express my support of LD 468 – An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food.

We sell our produce through several channels that utilize SNAP and Maine Harvest Bucks, namely through our CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) shares and at the Alan Day & Yarmouth Farmers Markets. Both markets are managed by volunteers and staff who share their time and resources to bring these markets to our communities. The Alan Day Market in Norway has a high rate of SNAP shoppers – in 2024, over 60% of our daily sales were made with SNAP and Maine Harvest Bucks coupons. Our daily sales in Norway saw an average of over \$200 in SNAP sales at just our booth alone.

Maine Harvest Bucks is an incredible program because it incentivizes new customers to visit the farmers' market and shop with us – as well as to return and shop again. It proves to Maine residents that eating local is a viable option – it increases access to healthy, fresh vegetables in our direct communities.

Furthermore, we utilize the Maine Harvest Bucks program to cover 50% of the cost of our CSA shares to SNAP recipients. In 2025, we have over 10 members signed up already to pay for their shares with SNAP and MHB. Since MHB covers 50%, it brings the cost of shares down to as low as \$40 per month for some households. This makes certified organic, locally grown produce widely available and affordable to households in our community. We farm in Oxford County, where there are fewer organic farms offering direct-to-consumer sales – we are proud to partner with Maine Harvest Bucks to ensure that everyone in our community has the opportunity to eat nutritious, delicious food.

While we are farmers, we are also eaters. During the season, our produce largely comes from the farm. As first generation farmers and business owners of a start-up business, we often struggle to make ends meet. We are SNAP recipients ourselves, and utilize the MHB program when we shop for additional produce from other farmers. We feel uniquely poised to demonstrate how important this funding is, and how this program supports a robust, economically viable and vibrant local food economy.

It is imperative that this funding be supported on a continuing basis of \$1.2 million per year. With such continuous funding, Maine Harvest Bucks and Maine Federation of Farmers Markets can ensure for the successful growth and expansion of the program without any funding uncertainties or interruptions.

This means that our farmers' markets across the state will continue to be a reliable source of fresh food for all members of our community. This means that I can widely promote our SNAP/Maine Harvest Bucks CSA shares and help increase the number of neighbors and community members who are eating locally – increasing their daily number of veggies and supporting healthy households in Oxford County.

There are so many uncertainties farmers and eaters are facing around food at this time. Fully supporting the continuous funding of this program is a direct action that has positive implications across the state, for all of Maine's eaters and residents. This is an incredible opportunity to invest in Maine's economy and local food shed and I urge the Legislature to support LD 468 wholeheartedly.

Thank you,
Janelle Plummer
New Spoke Farm
West Paris, Oxford County, Maine