

Daniel Towle
Freedom
LD 468

Testimony of Daniel Towle of Freedom 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 Dan Towle, I am a resident of Freedom, and I am here today as a vendor of bread at the Waterville Farmers Market to express my support of LD 468 – An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food.

I make an array of naturally-leavened, whole grain breads utilizing locally and sustainably grown grains, and have been vending at the Waterville Market since the Spring of last year. As a bread baker, I do not intend to get rich from my work. The merits of baking lie more in the opportunity to sustain myself in an honest, meaningful vocation and more importantly, in feeding my community. The Waterville Market has been an indispensable way to connect directly to the people in our community and some of our best and most loyal customers have taken advantage of the SNAP/EBT program. Being able to supply bread to those who may not have access to it otherwise is one of the most important reasons I do what I do. It is those interactions that keep me going, both motivationally and financially and I know I am not alone in this regard. Our market would not be what it is without these programs and our local economy is stronger because of them.

A quick look at our sales records shows 10-15 percent of total sales for each market were EBT transactions. Furthermore, the incentives of the doubled EBT funds and the Maine Harvest Bucks program brings more and more people out to the market. We were so pleasantly surprised to meet new customers each week and delighted when they returned week after week. One individual buys a loaf of bread for his elderly mother who is unable to attend the market.

I feel strongly that with the continuous funding of \$1.2 million each year, the statistics will continue to increase thus further bolstering an already vibrant local food economy and securing high-quality, nutritious foods to more underserved individuals, including families, children and senior citizens. Food access is of the utmost importance and Maine Federation of Farmers Markets has done an incredible job of helping to relieve hunger throughout the state and keeping the jobs of farmers, bakers and other producers viable and thriving. With the continuous funding, the Federation will be able to look ahead and continue their good work and spend less time securing adequate funding.

Good, nutritious food should be accessible to all Mainers. That is why I support LD-468.

Thank you for your time,

Daniel Towle
Vesper Bread
Freedom