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LD 415

I am writing as someone who works in food insecurity to support of LD 415, An Act to Support Hunger Prevention in Maine. Good Shepherd Food Bank's Mainers Feeding Mainers program addresses food insecurity, provides a reliable market for farmers, and connects Mainers to local agriculture.

Addressing hunger through local food is a compassionate way to provide a diverse array of nourishing foods to community members facing food insecurity. Local food helps to fortify the nutrition of the food that pantries are able to share with their communities. After a long winter, there is excitement for the return of fresh, local food. The Mainers Feeding Mainers program helps ensure that all Mainers have access to locally grown produce and can participate in the joy and nourishment of cooking with local food.

Maine farmers also benefit from the partnerships created by the Mainers Feeding Mainers program. Participating farmers are given a reliable market and a predictable income for their produce. This provides stability to a profession that is more susceptible to economic and climate variables. Farmers have the benefit of a dependable, direct market to consumers and consumers benefit by having access to nutritious local food and connection to local agriculture.

Strong, mutually beneficial partnerships between farmers, pantries and our food insecure communities are essential in making sure our local food system is resilient and accessible to all Mainers. I have seen first hand the nutritional impact that local food can have in the charitable food system. Likewise, I have also seen the impact that a steady, predictable market has on the livelihood of farmers. There are great relationships between pantries and farmers that are nurtured by this program. I hope you support LD 415 and continue to invest in the state of Maine's ability to grow food and feed food insecure communities.

Thank you,
Gillian Cridler