

Abigail Perry
Starks
LD 468

Dear members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry.

My name is Abigail Perry, I am a resident of Starks, and I am submitting my testimony today as a farmer and vendor at the Farmington Farmers Market to express my support of LD 468 – An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food.

I am a small, family farm, who has been participating in the Farmington Farmer's Market for 3 years. The market has a PT, seasonal employee and the rest of the time, the info booth is staffed by other vendors at the market.

Last year, Farmington Farmers' Market customers bought \$5756.59 of food with their SNAP benefits and used Maine Harvest Bucks to buy \$2843 of fresh fruits & vegetables. Over the course of the seven years FFM has had an Info booth, customers have bought \$30,562.15 of food with their SNAP benefits and used Maine Harvest Bucks to buy \$18,254 of fresh fruits & vegetables. We had 60 new SNAP customers at market last year and 228 since 2018.

For my farm personally, the MHB and SNAP programs have allowed me to connect with new customers in order to get more local food in the hands of people who are very interested. It also provides a great connection to younger children, who can be so excited to have a few "dollars" of their own to spend at the market, on a bright orange carrot, or a big red juicy tomato.

It is so important to maintain the CONTINUOUS FUNDING at the \$1.2 million level per year. That allows our market and others to plan for growth and expansion of the program without any funding uncertainties or interruption.