March 6, 2025

IN SUPPORT – LD 468 An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food

Dear Senator Talbot Ross – Chair, Representative Pluecker - Chair, and members of the Committee On Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry,

My name is Christine Cummings and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Grocers & Food Producers Association (MGFPA). The Maine Grocers & Food Producers Association is a business trade association representing Maine's food community; Main Street businesses, including independently owned and operated grocery stores and supermarkets, food and beverage producers and processors, manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors, and supportive service companies. I serve as a board member of the Good Shepherd Food Bank and collectively MGFPA is working diligently to reduce food insecurity in Maine.

Currently, 13 co-ops and small retailers participate in the *Farm Fresh Rewards* program. We're supportive of additional funding to expand the program to other Maine retail partners and to expand access to local and eligible produce. These programs increase the purchasing power of SNAP dollars.

In addition, this funding continues to support the updated Maine Climate Action plan goal to "Increase the amount of food consumed in Maine from state food producers to 30 percent by 2030". Farm Fresh Rewards (along with Harvest Bucks) are notated in the report as a way of connecting low-income Mainers with locally grown food. Maine's food producers and grocers are not only a key part of our economy but also serve as a vital connection between local farmers, food manufacturers, and Maine families. By supporting LD 468, you are investing in Maine-based businesses, ensuring the availability of quality local products, and strengthening the backbone of our state's food system.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Christine Cummings
Executive Director