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Testimony of Representative Ambureen Rana in support of
LD 792, An Act to Fund Medical Research and Cancer Prevention
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

My name is Ambureen Rana, and I represent House District 21 in Bangor. I write to you today in support of LD 792, An Act to Fund Medical Research and Cancer Prevention.

In our state, communities in Washington, Penobscot and Hancock Counties have higher overall cancer incidence rates compared to the rest of Maine. Maine's cancer death rate is significantly higher than the U.S. rate. The 2021 age-adjusted overall cancer mortality rate in Maine is 160.3 per 100,000, compared to the U.S. rate of 146.6.

For years, the Christine B. Foundation has been vital in supporting those navigating cancer care and nutrition in my community. Certain cancers drastically impact one's ability to access, consume and absorb healthy foods. The inability to consume healthy foods could result in malnutrition which, in turn, results in weight loss, muscle wasting and weakened immune function, impacting survival rates. According to the Christine B. Foundation, 50% of patients start treatment not meeting their daily total calorie intake, and 75% do not meet their daily fruit and vegetable intake.

Meeting nutritional needs while managing a cancer diagnosis is difficult on its own, not to mention the financial burden that accompanies this new challenge. Financial hardship, which is common among cancer patients, can lead to forgoing or delays in cancer care, loss of employment and income, debt and even bankruptcy. At the Christine B. Foundation, 93% of patients agree or strongly agree that their cancer diagnosis impacted their financial security.

National findings suggest that cost savings will result from "food as medicine" interventions. The Christine B. Foundation is a trusted Maine nonprofit bringing 70% of the cost of this pilot project to our community. The fiscal note attached to this bill secures the remaining funds. As the legislature considers cost savings, data is required to guide that discussion, which is the reason why this investment matters so deeply.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge you to vote in support of LD 792.