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55 Portland Street
Portland, ME 04101
207.775.0026
info@preblestreet.org
www.preblestreet.org



United Way
of Southern Maine



Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Annika Moore, and I am the Advocacy Team Leader at Preble Street. The mission of Preble Street is to provide accessible, barrier-free services to empower people experiencing problems with homelessness, housing, hunger, and poverty, and to advocate for solutions to these problems. Preble Street operates 16 programs throughout Maine, and its staff works daily alongside hundreds of individuals and families who struggle with food insecurity.

Preble Street strongly opposes LD 938, An Act to Implement Certain Local Spending and Sourcing Requirements Regarding the Statewide Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. This bill imposes restrictions on how Mainers can use their SNAP benefits, creating an additional barrier for households trying to put food on the table with an already limited benefit amount—approximately \$6 a day.

LD 938 requires SNAP recipients to use at least 10% of their monthly benefit within a 50-mile radius of their declared residence. If a household does not have a SNAP retailer within a 50-mile radius of their residence, they would lose 10% of their benefits by no fault of their own. For a family of four, this could amount to a loss of nearly \$850 worth of benefits each year.

The radius restriction will harm individuals forced to move on short notice, like victims of domestic violence. Given the size of our state and the limited availability of shelter beds, it is likely that someone would have to travel over 50 miles to find a safe place to stay if they are forced to leave their home on short notice. If this legislation were to go into effect, it could prevent these individuals from having full access to their SNAP benefits unless they are immediately able to update their residential address.

LD 938 also requires SNAP retailers to source 10% of all their perishable foods from within the state. By instituting this rule, the bill disincentivizes retailers from participating in the SNAP program; the result could be that even fewer retailers accept SNAP, and it becomes even more difficult for households to spend 10% of their SNAP benefits within a 50-mile radius of their declared residence.

Preble Street urges you to oppose LD 938 and support two other bills that more effectively strengthen local Maine agriculture and address food insecurity. LD 468 incentivizes SNAP recipients to shop locally through programs like Maine Harvest Bucks, while LD 415 facilitates partnerships between our state's food

banks and farmers. Food is a basic need and a human right. We must ensure that this right is protected for our most vulnerable neighbors.

Thank you for your time and consideration.