



April 24, 2025

Good afternoon Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry,

My name is Amy Sassi and I am the Vice President of Government Affairs for Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine. I am here today to testify in support of LD 1605, An Act to Support Farmers and Food Banks Affected by Federal Funding Cuts to Their Existing Contracts.

This bill establishes the Food System Protection Program, administered by the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, for the purpose of providing zero-interest loans and other resources to qualifying producers within the State, and nonprofit organizations within the State, established for the purpose of reducing hunger and increasing food security that have been affected by federal funding cuts and other changes to the status of contracts and certain federal programs.

Every few weeks, for the past few months, we have learned about another unexpected change at the federal level that impacts the food bank's ability to reduce the growing rate of hunger in Maine. These changes include the loss of \$1.25 million in funding to Maine over the next three years to purchase food from local farmers and distribute it to community food pantries. It includes a 50-percent reduction in food that we receive from the federal emergency food assistance program (TEFAP) and distribute to pantries. We know other organizations are impacted by deeper cuts than what we are experiencing.

The Food System Protection Program is a state solution to a preventable federal problem. Thank you for considering this solution.

In partnership,

Amy Sassi
Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine
Vice President of Government Affairs