Testimony of Nicole Hewes, M.Ed, MPS
Director of Projects & Communications, Apriqot, Inc. | North Yarmouth, Maine
In Support of LD 2040 – An Act to Survey Food Insecurity in Maine

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

My name is Nicole Hewes. I am a resident of North Yarmouth and a former educator who now works in public health. I am submitting testimony in strong support of **LD 2040**, a measured and responsible proposal to restore Maine's ability to track and understand food insecurity across the state. I'd like to thank Representative Pluecker for his commitment to Maine's initiative to end hunger.

Households, families, and children in every corner of Maine are currently experiencing food insecurity. In my work, both as an educator and now as a data analyst working in public health, I've witnessed firsthand how experiencing food insecurity impacts people in ways that are immediate, personal, and long-lasting. I've seen it in the classroom, with students relying on school breakfast and lunch for the bulk of their nutritional needs and I've seen it in the data, which reveals that, while the scale of need may vary, food insecurity impacts every community across our state.

We are fortunate in Maine to have an incredible network of organizations working to help provide support to people experiencing food insecurity – including Full Plates Full Potential, Good Shepherd Food Bank, and the Locker Project. We also have outstanding leadership from the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future and their "Ending Hunger in Maine" Initiative.

But, these organizations need data to determine how to best allocate their resources, which are increasingly limited due to the rising costs of acquiring food resources, loss of federal funding, and growing demand for support due to SNAP policy changes and the rising food prices we've all experienced at the grocery store. Historically, Maine and other states relied on a federal food insecurity survey – the food security supplement from the Current Population Survey (CPS) – to understand trends over time and differences between communities. That federal survey has now been canceled, leaving Maine with fewer consistent tools to measure need, track change, or evaluate whether major public investments are improving outcomes.

This creates real challenges for decision-makers and service providers alike. Hunger is one of the most urgent conditions a household can face — but when the available information is outdated, fragmented, or missing, it becomes much harder to identify where food insecurity is rising or falling, understand how it differs between communities, and target limited resources where they will make the biggest difference. Without timely, Maine-specific measurement, the state is effectively navigating this period with limited visibility into what is happening in Maine families, households, and communities.

LD 2040 will ensure Maine has the information it needs — not just to respond to food insecurity today, but to make smarter decisions year after year. I respectfully urge the Committee to support LD 2040. Thank you for your time and your commitment to the people of Maine.

Respectfully submitted,
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