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In Support of LD 2040: A Pilot Program to Assess Food Insecurity in Maine

Honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, I am Bill Pluecker, and I represent House District 44, comprising the towns of Warren, Hope and Union. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of this legislation.

Maine has set an ambitious and necessary goal: ending hunger by 2030. However, we cannot achieve what we do not measure. LD 2040, as amended by my sponsor's amendment, establishes a pilot program to comprehensively assess food insecurity across our state and track our progress toward this critical objective.

This legislation directs the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to partner with outside agencies and utilize the existing advisory committee to evaluate food insecurity in Maine. Importantly, the assessment will examine disparities among populations most vulnerable to hunger—sorted by age, geography, income, and veteran status. This data-driven approach ensures we understand not just the overall picture, but where gaps persist and which communities need targeted support.

My amendment makes this a true pilot program with built-in accountability. It sunsets in 2028 unless extended by the Legislature, requires a comprehensive review by January 2028, and operates only with designated funding—including potential private partnerships—so it creates no unfunded mandate. The Commissioner may contract with external agencies with expertise in food security research, ensuring rigorous, professional assessment.

Why does this matter? In my district and across Maine, food insecurity touches families we might never suspect—working parents choosing between groceries and heating oil, seniors stretching fixed incomes, veterans struggling after service to our nation. Without

accurate data showing where these challenges concentrate and whether our interventions work, we're operating blind.

One of the keys to our statewide progress has been the consistent collaboration between government, nonprofits, academia and for-profits. Nevertheless we have been lacking granular statewide data around food insecurity and a system to integrate the data. LD 2040 will fill this void, would promote even deeper collaboration and would incentivize public-private partnerships.

LD 2040 would enhance our current data, and provide our state with needed geographic diversity data. The result would be to understand our state's food insecurity more accurately so that we can make better decisions.

This is about accountability to Maine people who go to bed hungry and responsibility to taxpayers funding anti-hunger programs. We owe both groups clear answers about whether our efforts are working.

I respectfully urge your support for LD 2040. Thank you.