



January 14, 2026

**Testimony of the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project  
In Support of LD 2051  
“An Act to Ensure Access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance  
Program in Maine”**

Thank you to the members of the Committee on Health and Human Services for the opportunity to submit testimony today. This testimony is submitted by Lisa Parisio, Policy Director at the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP), in support of LD 2051, An Act to Ensure Access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in Maine.

**I. About ILAP:**

ILAP is Maine’s only statewide immigration legal services organization. ILAP specializes in complex, humanitarian cases, and serves those who otherwise would not have access to a lawyer, helping individuals and families achieve security and stability, enter the workforce, and make Maine home. As the only organization of our kind in the state, ILAP has a unique vantage over the often-compounding issues that put up roadblocks for immigrant communities in Maine being able to work, raise families, and build their lives here. These include barriers to accessing food and meeting other basic human needs.

**II. Clarifying that Maine’s SNAP Eligibility is Unchanged by Recent Federal Law Will Help Vulnerable Populations and Protect Capacity at DHHS and Non-Profit Services Providers:**

LD 2051 provides important clarifying language that recent changes in federal law under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025 do not impact eligibility guidelines for Maine’s state SNAP program. At ILAP, we frequently see the negative impacts of confusion around state benefits eligibility and the harm of improper denials.

For individuals, being able to meet basic needs is crucial in being able to navigate the high-stress and time-consuming demands of the immigration system, which can involve searching for and waiting to obtain legal help, many hours of working with an attorney, gathering documentation and evidence, court dates, interviews with federal government agencies, and more. When people are not able to meet their basic needs, they are less likely to be able to successfully navigate this system, which can lead to long-term instability and even more serious consequences like detention or deportation to dangerous or life-threatening conditions.

In the current federal enforcement environment, there has been a massive chilling effect leaving Maine’s immigrant communities scared to navigate daily life, including seeking assistance with meeting basic needs. ILAP’s clients and other immigrant communities are afraid to leave their homes, go to work, send children to school, and have contact with government officials at any level. The bill clarifying that Maine’s SNAP assistance program has not changed in the tumultuous federal environment would be a helpful step letting eligible people know that they can come forward to feed themselves and their children.

ILAP's capacity to provide immigration legal services is also impacted by lack of clarity in eligibility in benefits and improper denials. Our clients consistently come to us when they run into challenges meeting basic needs, and we often have to pivot away from our core work in order to provide referrals or otherwise help people who are facing challenges in navigating state systems. This bill would help protect capacity at organizations like ILAP. Likewise, DHHS can also lose efficiency and capacity when there is a lack of clarity in eligibility and this guidance from the legislature would help address this.

Accordingly, clearly codifying that recent changes in federal law does not impact state SNAP eligibility for noncitizens would help meet basic human needs in our state as well protect capacity at services organizations and within the state government itself.

### **III. Ensuring that Maine Residents Do Not Go Hungry Is the Right Thing To Do and Helping New Mainers Meet Basic Needs Continues to Be a Key Investment for Maine's Future:**

Helping all Maine residents – regardless of immigration status – meet basic needs is the humane and morally right thing to do, and as always, supporting new Mainers is an investment in Maine's future and prosperity.

According to a recent study by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Maine is facing unprecedented workforce shortages, with just 54 workers available for every 100 open jobs.<sup>1</sup> The Chamber rates Maine's labor shortage in the "most severe" category.<sup>2</sup>

Maine's immigrant communities are key to improving Maine's economic outlook,<sup>3</sup> and meeting basic human needs is the foundation of a person being able to win permanent immigration protections or otherwise put down strong roots in our state and making lasting contributions.

### **IV. Conclusion:**

LD 2051 provides important clarity to ensure Maine is helping vulnerable communities meet basic needs – in line with current law and policy – and it will help protect capacity at Maine's nonprofit organizations and DHHS, while investing in Maine's future.

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<sup>1</sup> Lindsay Cates and Stephanie Ferguson, *Understanding America's Labor Shortage: The Most Impacted States*, U.S. Chamber of Commerce (May 2, 2024), [www.uschamber.com/workforce/the-states-suffering-most-from-the-labor-shortage?state=me](https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/the-states-suffering-most-from-the-labor-shortage?state=me).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*