

Testimony in Support of LD 2051

An Act to Ensure Access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Sponsor: Representative Pluecker

Public Hearing: Health and Human Services Committee 14th, January 2026, 1:00 PM

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

My name is Ruben Torres, and I serve as the Advocacy and Policy Manager for the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC). MIRC is a statewide coalition of more than 100 organizations, including immigrant-led groups, legal service providers, and direct service agencies. Together, we work to improve the economic and social standing of Maine's immigrant communities, recognizing that stable immigrant families strengthen Maine's workforce, public health, and local economies. We are here today in support of LD 2051 *An Act to Ensure Access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*.

LD 2051 responds to the passage of H.R. 1 at the federal level, which narrowed SNAP eligibility by redefining which immigration statuses qualify for federal assistance. Among these changes was a further narrowing of eligibility for certain lawfully present immigrants with humanitarian protections. As a result, individuals and families who had been eligible for SNAP for years lost access to federally funded food assistance based solely on immigration status; not because of a change in income, employment, or need.

The groups affected include people who were previously eligible for SNAP before July 2025, such as refugees and asylees, survivors of domestic violence self-petitioning under VAWA, and certain survivors of severe human trafficking and their family members. Many of these individuals also qualify for existing hardship exceptions under Maine's program, including older adults, people with disabilities, individuals experiencing domestic violence, those awaiting work authorization, or those who are temporarily unemployed.

The purpose of LD 2051 is not to expand Maine's state SNAP program. Specifically, it clarifies the definition of "noncitizen legally admitted to the United States" to ensure that individuals who lost federal SNAP eligibility under H.R. 1 can still access state-funded benefits if they meet all other eligibility criteria. Without clarification, eligible households risk losing benefits they should qualify for under Maine law. It ensures that a federal policy change does not inadvertently undo nearly three decades of Maine policy designed to prevent hunger among residents who meet the state's eligibility standards. While Maine cannot fill every gap left by federal cuts, LD 2051 is a targeted, practical step that uses existing infrastructure to prioritize those most impacted.

For these reasons, MIRC urges the Committee to support LD 2051. Thank you for your time and consideration, and I am happy to answer any questions.

References:

1. SNAP Reduces Food Insecurity

- USDA reports that SNAP participation improves household food security and that food security deteriorates before benefit receipt and improves afterward.
- Research published in *The Journal of Nutrition* found that SNAP participation significantly reduces food insecurity.
- Urban Institute research shows SNAP reduces the likelihood of being food insecure by roughly 30% and very low food security by 20%.

2. SNAP Supports Well-Being and Poverty Reduction

- CBPP analysis shows SNAP is a powerful anti-poverty tool and significantly reduces food insecurity among vulnerable populations, including children.
- USDA insights note that SNAP improves food security and helps families afford nutritious food, easing pressure on other household spending.

3. Food Security Helps Prevent Larger Social Costs

- USDA and Pew analysis show improved food security from SNAP helps reduce long-term health costs and chronic disease risk.

4. Related Evidence on Strengthening Health & Stability

- The Richmond Fed explains that SNAP reduces the prevalence of poverty and leads to reductions in food insecurity and poverty when properly accounted for.