



## **Testimony of Kristen Kinchla, Maine Children's Alliance**

### **In Support of LD 2051, An Act to Ensure Access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

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

My name is Kristen Kinchla—I go by Kinch—and I am the Research Associate at the Maine Children's Alliance. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of LD 2051. I also want to thank Representative Pluecker for his leadership and commitment to Maine's goal of ending hunger.

This bill makes a small, technical update to Maine law to make sure that some immigrants who are legally living here, but will lose federal SNAP benefits because of recent federal changes, can still receive Maine's state-funded food assistance—just as the Legislature intended when the program was created 30 years ago.

The context for this bill is Maine's growing child hunger crisis.

Maine currently has the 10th-highest rate of childhood food insecurity in the nation and the highest rate in New England by a significant margin. In 2023, more than one in five children—20.6%, or roughly 50,610 Maine kids—experienced food insecurity.

Federal changes are expected to reduce or eliminate benefits for an estimated 101,000 Maine households by 2034, placing additional strain on families, schools, healthcare systems, and local food providers.

LD 2051 does not expand Maine's program or create new types of benefits. It simply updates the law so that families who are legally living in the U.S. and meet existing hardship requirements—including refugees and survivors of domestic violence or trafficking—are not wrongly denied these benefits because of outdated legal wording.

For children, consistent access to food is not optional—it is foundational to healthy development, school success, and long-term economic stability. When families lose food

