



Testimony in Opposition to LD 2051:

“An Act to Ensure Access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in Maine”

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and the distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Harris Van Pate, and I am a policy analyst at Maine Policy Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that works to advance individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to LD 2051.

While framed as a technical clarification of eligibility language, this bill would in practice substantially expand state-funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility beyond federal limits, expose Maine taxpayers to open-ended fiscal liability, and undermine both program integrity and the rule of law.

LD 2051 deliberately circumvents federal SNAP eligibility standards

LD 2051 explicitly redefines “noncitizen legally admitted to the United States” to include individuals who were previously eligible for SNAP but lost eligibility due to changes in federal law enacted in 2025. This is not a neutral clarification. It is a conscious policy decision to backfill federal eligibility rollbacks with state resources.

When Congress narrows eligibility for a federally funded welfare program, states face a choice: respect those limits or assume the cost themselves. LD 2051 chooses the latter, without any accompanying cost controls, funding mechanism, or sunset provision.

The bill relies on vague and expansive legal categories

The bill extends eligibility to individuals “pursuing any lawful immigration process” or those with “permanent residence under color of law.” These terms are extraordinarily broad, lack precise statutory definition, and are not synonymous with lawful permanent residence or citizenship.

Such language:

- Makes eligibility determinations difficult to administer and verify
- Increases the risk of inconsistent application and litigation
- Weakens safeguards against improper enrollment

From a policy perspective, this is a step away from targeted, temporary assistance and toward indefinite eligibility based on ambiguous status.



LD 2051 creates open-ended fiscal exposure for the State

Although the bill contains no direct appropriation, its fiscal effect is clear: it commits Maine to funding SNAP benefits for individuals no longer eligible under federal law.

This approach raises serious concerns:

- Costs are uncapped and dependent on future federal policy changes
- The bill shifts financial responsibility from the federal government to Maine taxpayers
- No cost estimate, guardrails, or triggers for legislative review are provided

At a time when Maine faces long-term budget pressures driven by entitlement growth, expanding welfare eligibility without fiscal discipline is irresponsible.

Conclusion

LD 2051 is not a narrow access measure. It is a state-level expansion of welfare eligibility that overrides federal standards, relies on vague legal definitions, and exposes the General Fund to potentially significant long-term costs.

For these reasons, the Maine Policy Institute urges the Committee to vote Ought Not to Pass. Thank you for your time and consideration.