

Testimony of Senator Rachel Talbot Ross
In Support of LD 2051, “An Act to Ensure Access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program”
January 14, 2026

Senator Ingwersen, Senator Moore, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee. I am Senator Rachel Talbot Ross. I represent Senate District 28, which includes part of Portland, part of the Casco Bay Islands, and the University of Southern Maine Campus. I am here today to support LD 2051, “An Act to Ensure Access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.”

Prior to the H.R. 1 cuts that were passed by Congress and the Trump Administration, SNAP was available to various humanitarian statuses such as refugees, asylees, survivors of domestic violence, and survivors of trafficking. However, when the “Big Beautiful Bill” was passed in July 2025, the changes to SNAP benefits in that legislation specifically targeted these minority groups.

A human being can not live without food. For low-income Mainers, like the groups that will be affected by the H.R. 1 cuts to SNAP – lawfully present immigrants such as refugees, asylees, survivors of domestic violence, and survivors of trafficking – SNAP provides them with consistent food access every month to try and improve their lives.

Unfortunately, the action taken by Congress and the Trump Administration is similar to something we have seen before. In 1997, the federal government tried to exclude lawfully present immigrants from federal means-tested benefits under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). Maine recognized that this was wrong and took action by creating a state-funded food assistance program. The state-funded program provided food assistance for noncitizens who were legally admitted entrance into the United States.

LD 2051 does not change the purpose and scope of the state’s SNAP program. It merely clarifies who is eligible for specific immigration terms. Clarifying the language of the existing statute to ensure that those who were eligible for SNAP before will be eligible for the state-funded programs. CreatingBy creating a clear definition, this will allow the Department of Health and Human Services to distribute the benefits effectively. Prior to H.R. 1 will remain eligible for the state-funded programs by creating a clear definition will allow the Department of Health and Human Services to distribute the benefits effectively.

It will be incredibly hard for the State of Maine to mitigate the negative effects of the H.R. 1 cuts, but LD 2051 is one way that we can do this. LD 2051 does not introduce new or

complicated programs; it simply clarifies an existing statute to ensure we treat all populations equally. Immigrants are already facing difficult times right now, and as a Legislature, it is our duty to try to make their lives easier. One way we can accomplish this is by helping them have consistent access to food.

Access to food should not be privileged; it is a fundamental human right.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to support LD 2051. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Rachel Talbot Ross
Senate District 28

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