



February 18, 2026

Good afternoon Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Amy Sassi and I am the Director of Government Affairs for Good Shepherd Food Bank. Good Shepherd Food Bank works to end hunger in Maine by partnering with community food pantries, meal sites, and other hunger-relief organizations, while advocating for policies and systems that strengthen food security.

The emergency food network is the last resort, the safety net below the safety net. When other programs such as SNAP are available, fewer people rely on their local pantries to make ends meet. During the pandemic, SNAP Emergency Allotments increased the SNAP benefit amount for each household, and we heard from pantries across the state that reported people they are used to seeing regularly did not have to access the pantry because they were able to buy what they needed at the grocery store. As soon as those Emergency Allotments ended, pantry visits increased. Similarly, when there was SNAP disruption this fall, pantry visits spiked just at the SNAP unknown. 600 pantries across the state do their very best to meet the needs of their communities, but the emergency food network is not, and should not be, a replacement for SNAP and other systemic solutions.

SNAP is the most effective anti-hunger program in the United States. It helps 170,000 people in Maine afford the food they need. SNAP dollars are spent in grocery stores, small businesses, and farmers markets across the state. In every community, SNAP is an essential piece of the solution to reduce hunger.

HR1 introduced several changes to the SNAP program. We advocated strongly against these changes with our Members of Congress, and will continue to do so at every opportunity including our next trip to DC in two weeks. The budget before you provides three investments to begin to mitigate the harm of HR1; increasing staff, updating technology, and a heating assistance initiative. We support all these initiatives. I am particularly excited about the newly launched SNAP Program Integrity Unit, which will identify areas of high error rate and recommend targeted solutions such as the heating assistance initiative.

We must work together to mitigate the harm of HR1. This budget is a strong start. Thank you to the Governor and the Department for their inclusion of these initiatives, and please vote in support.

PO Box 1807 • 3121 Hotel Road • Auburn, ME 04211 • Tel: 207-782-3554 • Fax: 207-782-9893 •





In partnership,

Amy Sassi
Good Shepherd Food Bank
Director of Government Affairs

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