

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chip Leighton

President

Yemaya St. Clair

Vice President

Joann Bautista

Secretary

Justin Rosner

Treasurer

Becca Asen

Terry Davies

Chris Ellingwood

Lauren Gauthier

Joe Ingream

Christopher Pyne

John Roberts

Elaine Rosen

Maurice A. Selinger III

Terry Sutton

Jay Tansey

Lannie Welch

Mark R. Swann

Executive Director

55 Portland Street

Portland, ME 04101

207.775.0026

info@preblestreet.org

www.preblestreet.org

United Way
of Southern MaineCHARITY
NAVIGATOR
Four Star Charity

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and Members of the Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry,

My name is Annika Moore, and I am the Advocacy Supervisor at Preble Street. The mission of Preble Street is to provide accessible barrier-free services to empower people experiencing problems with homelessness, hunger, and poverty, and to advocate for solutions to these problems. Our Food Security Hub (FSH), located in South Portland, currently produces over 2,500 meals daily for people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity, youth, families with children, immigrants and asylum seekers, older adults, and Veterans.

On behalf of Preble Street, I am writing to express our strong support for section F-1 of the FY2026–27 Supplemental Budget. This section allows the Governor to distribute up to \$4 million from the budget stabilization fund to food security nonprofits during a state of emergency, improving the effectiveness of a critical safety net previously capped at \$400,000.

One of the primary goals of Preble Street's Food Security Hub is to prepare and store meals that can be distributed across the state during emergencies. Up to 10,000 meals daily can be produced in our industrial kitchen, and our freezer has the capacity to store up to 50,000 prepared meals. Food boxes from the FSH pantry regularly feed Maine households from York to Bangor. In October of last year, we had just celebrated the opening of this new facility when we learned that USDA would be withholding SNAP funds for the month of November. Immediately, our phones began to ring.

Helen, an older woman living in Portland, was panicking about how she would put food on the table for her 95-year-old mother and disabled adult son. Kim had just moved into her own apartment after living outside for seven years. In preparation for her first Thanksgiving inside, she had been meticulously planning her holiday grocery list. Thomas, an unsheltered, disabled Veteran, had zero income and was terrified that he would go hungry without SNAP benefits.

As these calls and hundreds more like them poured into our programs, we sprang into emergency response mode. We doubled our daily meal production, stocked up on essentials for our pantry, and planned expanded food delivery to older and disabled Mainers. On one day in early November, our pantry sent out over 100 food boxes—our highest distribution number in months. And we were not alone. Food pantries and communities across Maine came together to feed our neighbors in need.

Starting in January, we increased meal production again in response to the ICE crisis. Since then, we've been working with our partners at immigrant led agencies to ensure that families of people taken by ICE or afraid to leave their homes have food on the table. Again, the broader community has come together to respond to neighbors in need. But Preble Street and our anti-hunger partners across the state cannot do this alone. It is simply not sustainable.

Preble Street appreciates that section F-1 of the Supplemental Budget allows for swift action to address food security during emergencies like the SNAP and ICE crises or catastrophic weather. With up to \$4 million in funding, Maine's food security network will be better able to purchase ingredients, ramp up production, and transport food

during these situations. It could be the critical difference that keeps Mainers fed and allows them to recover.

We also encourage the AFA Committee to consider ways that budget stabilization funds could be used to replace SNAP benefits directly, in the event of any future large-scale disruptions to the SNAP program. Approximately 170,000 Mainers rely on SNAP. For every meal served by food pantries, SNAP provides nine. SNAP reaches places that pantries cannot, providing assistance to Mainers who live in rural areas or lack reliable transportation.

When paired with the language in section F-1, allowing budget stabilization funds to replace SNAP benefits directly would create a responsible framework for emergency response situations without affecting today's budget.

Providing Mainers with healthy, nourishing meals during times of crisis has been at the heart of Preble Street's work for decades. Over the years, we've learned the importance of planning and preparedness when trying to keep Mainers fed, and we recognize that section F-1 represents exactly that kind of approach.

Please support section F-1 of the FY2026–27 Supplemental Budget and strengthen the state's capacity for critical food relief during emergencies.

Thank you for your time and consideration.