



**Testimony of Jessica Fay for
The Maine Council on Aging
March 5, 2026
In Support of LD 2122**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Jess Fay and I am the Policy and Advocacy Director for the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA), a broad, multidisciplinary network of over 140 organizations, businesses, municipalities, and older community members working to ensure we can all live healthy, engaged, and secure lives with choices and opportunities as we age at home and in community settings.

On its own, and as a member of the Hunger Free Maine, a coalition formed to advocate for policies to advance Maine’s Roadmap to End Hunger, the MCOA is testifying **in support of LD 2122 - An Act to Prevent Negative Impacts from Federal Funding Changes to and Fund Eligibility Determinations and Outreach for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.**

According to the Maine 2025 Healthy Aging Data Report¹ the statewide average for people over the age of 60 receiving SNAP benefits is 10.85% and in over 50 communities that number is between 16 and 37% (see the attached map to find out how many older Mainers in your district are on SNAP). Older adults in rural communities are at higher risk for food insecurity. For so many older Mainers who live on fixed incomes that don’t keep up with the cost of living, SNAP is a lifeline that ensures they don’t go hungry.

Older adults face poorer health and increased chronic disease when they have poor nutrition. These chronic diseases include an increased risk of compromised immunity, bone loss which can lead to a higher risk of falling, slower healing from injury, cognitive decline, and increased depression and anxiety. These conditions can often create additional costs in our healthcare system due to increased utilization - and in the case of uncompensated care - an increase in the costs that we all pay. This makes SNAP a good investment in the health of Maine people.

LD 2122 creates a fund that would allow the state to maintain SNAP benefits if there should be an interruption in federal funding. For food insecure older people, this fund would make sure older Mainers don’t go hungry and avoid unnecessary health issues. A Resource Specialist at one of Maine’s Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) shared “SNAP is such a critical benefit. It is a go to

¹ Dugan, E., Lee, C.M., Jansen, T., Song, Q., Su, Y.J., & Silverstein, N.M. The Maine Healthy Aging Data Report: 2025 Highlights. (www.healthyagingdatareports.org/maine-healthy-aging-data-report/).

program that we can connect older adults, adults with disabilities and caregivers to when they are struggling to make ends meet.”

When the surviving spouse of a veteran reached out to an AAA about help with the increasingly unaffordable costs of housing, including property taxes and mobile home park rent, it was determined that they qualified for SNAP and were eligible for a \$286/month benefit. While this seems a small amount, it helped this person stay in their home *and* be able to eat.

LD 2122 also includes funding for SNAP outreach to people like the surviving spouse mentioned above. Many older Mainers who qualify for SNAP aren't receiving this benefit because of the stigma around food insecurity and accepting assistance, or they simply don't know they qualify for the benefit. SNAP outreach can reduce stigma, increase trust, and connect hard-to-reach areas and populations, including rural older people.

SNAP outreach and education can not only help hungry people receive benefits, but it can also help those who already qualify maintain that qualification. People 65 and older remain exempt from community engagement requirements for SNAP. However, there is a new requirement that people age 60-64 participate. Because this age group is newly required to participate in the work requirement and many may already be retired, SNAP outreach to this group is critical for their understanding of the need for new eligibility redetermination. It will also help decrease the error rate amongst this population by making sure their paperwork is accurate and up to date.

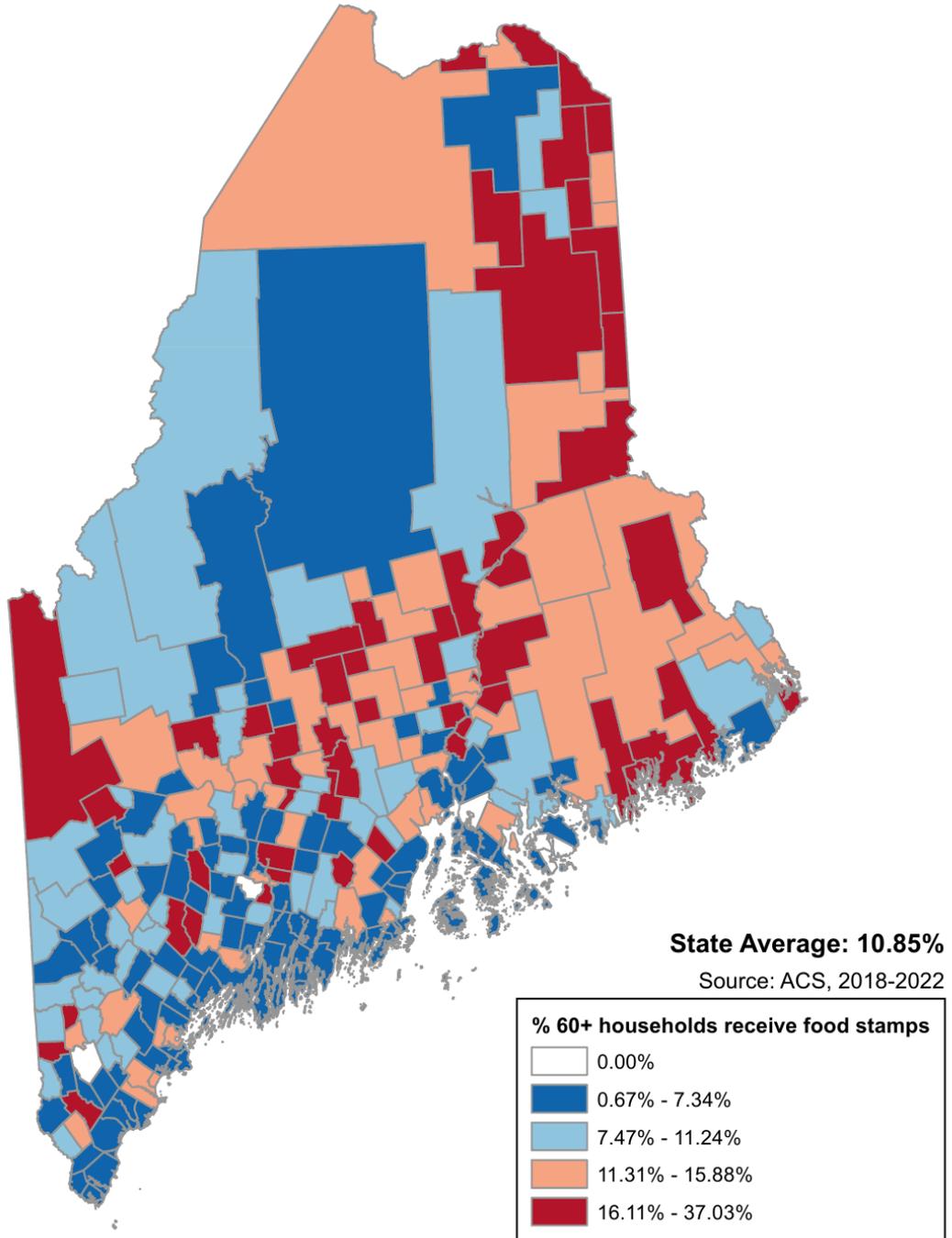
Having contingency funding and provisions for outreach to existing and eligible SNAP recipients will have a positive impact on the health and well-being of older people across Maine. Please vote Ought to Pass on LD 2122.

Thank you

Jessica Fay
jfay@mainecouncilonaging.org

Map 40

Percentage of Population 60+ Receiving Food Stamps in Past Year



Map generated 12/2024 by The Healthy Aging Data Report Team at Gerontology Institute, University of Massachusetts Boston
To see more Healthy Aging Data Reports go to www.healthyagingdatareports.org | Research supported by the Point32Health Foundation