

**Testimony 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”**

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Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is James Myall, and I’m a policy analyst at the Maine Center for Economic Policy. MECEP is a member of Hunger Free Maine, a coalition of organizations working to ensure a food-secure Maine. I’m here to testify 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,” because MECEP knows that ensuring that no Mainer goes hungry is both the right thing to do and the foundation of a strong Maine economy.

LD 2122 comes at a time when our safety net is under an unprecedented threat from Washington. The federal reconciliation bill passed in July threatens SNAP eligibility for tens of thousands of Mainers and potentially shifts tens of millions of dollars in costs onto Maine’s general fund budget.<sup>1</sup> During last November’s government shutdown we saw the federal government attempt to withhold benefits for all forty million SNAP recipients nationwide. Meanwhile, food insecurity in Maine is rising<sup>2</sup> and the cost of groceries is a key concern for Americans.<sup>3</sup>

LD 2122 responds to some of these threats, though MECEP would like to see it take a more comprehensive approach. Establishing a contingency fund to cover SNAP benefits in the event of a federal shutdown or another interruption in federal funding is a prudent precaution to ensure that vulnerable Mainers aren’t the victims of political disagreements in Washington. Setting aside one-time funding for an emergency would be an appropriate use of the Budget Stabilization Fund.

The investments in the bill to reduce Maine’s payment error rate, like those proposed by the Governor in her supplemental budget, are essential to reduce Maine’s exposure to federal penalties under HR1. If Maine’s payment error rate remains at its current level, Maine will be required to pay approximately **\$50 million a year** beginning next biennium to maintain the current level of benefits.<sup>4</sup> However, while the investment in this bill and the budget are welcome, *there is no guarantee they will reduce the payment error rate*, particularly in light of the new administrative burdens imposed in the recent legislation.

And even if Maine does reduce its error rate, it is still likely that we will be responsible for a significant cost share. Bringing the payment error rate from the current 10.3% to between 8 and 10% would still require new state spending of approximately **\$35 million a year**.

Therefore, MECEP is concerned that neither the supplemental budget nor LD 2122 budgets for this significant expenditure that the state is facing down.

Additionally, we believe the state should be prepared to cover the full SNAP benefits for at least some of the Mainers who are at risk of losing their benefits due to the recent federal changes. No one should go hungry because they aren't able to find consistent work, let alone when they have work but get caught up in unnecessary red tape trying to prove it.

MECEP estimates that up to 20,000 Mainers are likely to lose their eligibility for food assistance under the new work reporting requirements and the end of previous waivers. Covering the full cost of SNAP benefits these individuals – including Mainers who are housing-insecure, veterans, or living in rural areas with high unemployment – would cost around \$42 million a year.<sup>5</sup> This cost could also be reduced through targeting specific groups who recently lost their exemption from work reporting.

Fundamentally, HR 1 took food assistance away from millions of Americans to help pay for tax cuts that disproportionately benefitted large corporations and wealthy individuals. Maine should take the opportunity to reverse some of that harm, and ask people who never have to worry about where their next meal is coming from to help support the most vulnerable of our friends and neighbors through higher taxes on the wealthy.

Thank you for your time. I'll be happy to take any questions.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Maine Department of Health and Human Services, *Summary Of Proposed Federal Changes And Impact On Maine*. Oct 24, 2025 [https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/ImpactSummary\\_Medicaid-SNAP-Marketplace\\_Oct2025.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/ImpactSummary_Medicaid-SNAP-Marketplace_Oct2025.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Matthew P. Rabbitt et al., "Household Food Security in the United States in 2024." *US Department of Agriculture*. Dec 2025. [https://www-tx.ers.usda.gov/sites/default/files/\\_laserfiche/publications/113623/ERR-358.pdf?v=94557](https://www-tx.ers.usda.gov/sites/default/files/_laserfiche/publications/113623/ERR-358.pdf?v=94557)

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<sup>3</sup> Shannon Schumacher et al., “KFF Health Tracking Poll: Health Care Costs, Expiring ACA Tax Credits, and the 2026 Midterms.” *KFF*. Jan 29, 2026. <https://www.kff.org/public-opinion/kff-health-tracking-poll-health-care-costs-expiring-aca-tax-credits-and-the-2026-midterms/>

<sup>4</sup> Maine Department of Health and Human Services, *Summary Of Proposed Federal Changes And Impact On Maine*. Oct 24, 2025 [https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/ImpactSummary\\_Medicaid-SNAP-Marketplace\\_Oct2025.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/ImpactSummary_Medicaid-SNAP-Marketplace_Oct2025.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> James Myall, “Maine lawmakers have tools to stop the harms of the Republican reconciliation bill.” *Maine Center for Economic Policy*. Dec 19, 2025. <https://www.mecep.org/blog/maine-lawmakers-have-tools-to-stop-the-harms-of-the-republican-reconciliation-bill/>