

Good Morning Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and honorable members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry.

My name is Linda Holtslander. I am from Peaks Island and I ask you to support LD 1612: An Act to Address Food Insecurity and Support Local Agriculture.

I have been a volunteer at the Preble Street Food Security Hub since its opening, coming three to four days a week.

What I see and participate in, should and can be the prototype for programs dedicated to ending hunger across the nation. Everyday pallet after pallet filled with farm fresh Maine seasonal vegetables and fruit arrive awaiting transformation into nutritional meals; meals that are designed to provide health giving benefits.

In a given week 6,000 to 10,000 pounds of fresh Maine produce arrive. What happens next is astonishing. A well-organized corps of Food Security Hub staff and volunteers take the potatoes, cabbage, carrots, onions, tomatoes, and blueberries and start cleaning, chopping, and filling pans to prepare 2,000 meals a day.

I remember one significant day when another volunteer and I chopped onions for six hours. While next to us a group had taken on boxes and boxes of cabbages. On the other side of the room, mushrooms and carrots galore were going into pans. We all knew that we were allies in helping someone move away from hunger for a day.

I volunteer my time and energy because I care that people are hungry in Maine and that they need and deserve nutritious and delicious homemade, Maine-sourced food. Thousands of individuals and families are going hungry every day in our state.

Passing LD 1612 will provide \$2 million to Preble Street's Food Security Hub allowing them to finish renovations and create 10,000 hot meals a day for our neighbors in need.

I have a long professional career of working with non-profits, the bottom line for success to me is if they have a sustainable plan and the knowledge, abilities, and skills to make it work. Preble Street has done exactly that. Blending their goals with that of Good Shepherd Food Bank's vast network of more than 300 food pantries throughout the state. This showcases how ending hunger is a collaborative effort.

I believe in Preble Street and what the Food Security Hub will accomplish. Let Maine lead the way.

Please vote "ought to pass" on LD 1612.

Thank you.