



Free Legal Help for Maine's Seniors

May 1, 2023

Testimony of John Brautigam Esq., Legal Services for the Elderly, in support of L.D. 1584 -- An Act to Provide Funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to Temporarily Restore Benefits Being Reduced by the Federal Government.

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

On behalf of Legal Services for the Elderly I would like to testify in support of LD 1584. Legal Services for the Elderly (LSE) is a nonprofit legal services organization. We provide free legal assistance to Maine's older adults when their basic human needs are threatened. Our clients are all aged sixty or older and most have very low incomes. Some are the most physically and financially compromised people in our communities.

Every day at LSE and other organizations working in our communities we encounter the heartbreaking circumstances of Mainers who do not have enough to eat.

SNAP is a vital benefit that helps low-income families purchase nutritious food. It is a lifeline for many who are struggling to afford the undeniably higher cost of basic groceries. The increase in SNAP disbursements during the pandemic was literally a life-saver. But these payments were reduced, and many are struggling to make ends meet. If we cannot sustain the higher level of SNAP benefits offered during the height of the pandemic, we should at least consider providing a gradually reducing subsidy to blunt the abrupt reduction in SNAP payments. This bill will do that.

SNAP helps reduce costs in other areas. Families unable to afford nutritious food are at higher risk for health problems such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. This in turn exacerbates the strain on our healthcare system. Children who do not have healthy meals are more likely to experience developmental delays and struggle academically, leading to future economic costs.

Ensuring that our most vulnerable populations have access to the resources they need to thrive must be a priority. Yes, this will affect the budget, but it is among the most important measures we can take, with widespread benefits far in excess of the price tag.

Please support LD 1584. Thank you.

LEGAL SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY, INC.
5 Wabon Street, Augusta, Maine 04333
(207) 621-0087 Fax (207) 621-0742
Offices in Augusta, Bangor, Lewiston, Biddeford and Presque Isle
LSE Helpline 1-800-750-5353 (Voice/TTY)
www.mainelse.org