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Testimony in Support for LD 1584: An Act to Provide Funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to Temporarily Restore Benefits Being Reduced by the Federal Government.

Good afternoon Chairs Baldacci and Meyer and honorable members of the Joint Committee on Health and Human Services, always nice to be with you

My name is Paul Armstrong. I live in Palermo and I am the Lead Volunteer Advocate for AARP Maine. I was also awarded the Steadfast Advocate award this year. Today, I am testifying in support of LD 1584.

I am a single, permanently disabled resident of Maine over 60 years old. I own my own home as I told you previously. I became permanently disabled after a long fall 25 years ago. I currently subsist on SSDI and government benefits like LiHeap and yes, SNAP. The SNAP program has helped me cope with living on such a limited income.

I was so dismayed when they stopped the supplemental benefits granted through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. I contacted our federal Senators and Congressional leaders. They all responded in kind saying the supplemental benefits were approved and appropriated by the federal government and were passed to the states for distribution. I then started contacting my state Senator and Representative and all others I had encounters with. To my surprise the majority of them had no knowledge of the program nor of it being stopped.

Yes, the pandemic has finally eased but the after effects such as high inflation hasn't. You would have to be living off the land completely to have not noticed and suffered the price of food these days. Snap does not cover all our of food needs but it certainly helps. While my benefits are back to pre-pandemic days, I figure my benefits are about halved right now due to the higher food costs. A dear friend who works for Good Shepard has told me the struggle they are having trying to keep up with the added demand due to the cuts and higher prices.

By passing this bill, we will be doing our responsibility to help those who truly need help the most. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. On behalf of AARP Maine, I respectfully ask you to vote in favor of LD 709.

1584

Thank you,
Paul Armstrong
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