

PARTNERING TO END HUNGER



**Good Shepherd**

FOOD BANK OF MAINE

January 30, 2024

Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine testimony to the Committee on State and Local Government in support of LD 2167, An Act to Develop Maine's Economy and Strengthen Its Workforce by Establishing an Office of New Americans.

To Chairperson Nagle, Chairperson Stover, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government,

My name is Amy Regan Gallant and I am the Vice President of Public Policy for Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine. I am here today to express our support, and ask for your support, of LD 2167.

The mission of Good Shepherd Food Bank is to eliminate hunger in Maine by improving access to nutritious food for people in need, building strong community partnerships, and mobilizing the public in the fight to end hunger. Good Shepherd Food Bank works in partnership with nearly 600 organizations to help distribute food to community members in need. Our network of partner agencies includes food pantries, meal sites, senior centers, school programs, and healthcare facilities. In our work centering equity, we are increasingly working with communities of color to address food security in a culturally responsive way.

According to the recently released USDA Household Food Insecurity in the U.S. Report, Maine has the highest rates of hunger in New England with approximately 10% of Maine households experiencing food insecurity last year. The food bank and food pantries are hearing that more Mainers across the state are having trouble meeting their basic needs due to rising costs, reduction in SNAP benefits, and other economic factors that impact household budgets. A sampling of data from 40 food pantries in Maine indicate that food pantry visits have increased by more than 35% between 2022 and 2023, and an estimated 15% more households are accessing pantries that have never had to access a pantry previously. While need can vary greatly from one community to the next, our sampling of data and the anecdotes we hear indicate that need is growing during these challenging economic times.

New Americans are among those disproportionately impacted by poverty and food insecurity in Maine. According to the the Ending Hunger in Maine by 2030 Roadmap, 28% of Maine households headed by a Person of Color are food insecure and 40% of Maine households headed by a Black person are food insecure. Feeding America and Good Shepherd Food Bank are prioritizing a strategic plan that includes reducing hunger by "race and space" meaning New Americans and rural areas. Food pantries move mountains every day to meet emergency and ongoing needs. The proposed Office of New Americans will allow Good Shepherd Food Bank and the partners we support, particularly BIPOC-led organizations, to better understand the complexities of meeting the unique needs of New Americans living in Maine and support appropriate and effective solutions to food insecurity.

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We believe there is a solution to the problem of hunger in Maine. Working in partnership with the state legislature we can and will help reduce the impact of hunger in our state and make Maine a stronger, better place to work and live.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

Sincerely,

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Vice President of Public Policy  
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