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Good Shepherd

FOOD BANK OF MAINE

February 26, 2024

Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine testimony to the Committee On Appropriations and Financial Affairs in opposition of LD 2214, An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025.

Good afternoon Senator Rotundo, Senator Baldacci, Representative Sachs, Representative Meyer and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services Committees,

My name is Khadija Ahmed, and I am the Community Impact Manager for Good Shepherd Food Bank. I am here today to express our opposition to the proposed change to state-funded SNAP included in the budget for consideration.

Part QQ of the proposed budget repeals the hardship exception that allows access to state-funded SNAP benefits for some of the immigrants we serve. If this stays in the budget, individuals who are federally ineligible for SNAP based on their immigration status and who can currently receive state-funded SNAP benefits would lose those benefits as soon as they received their work authorization, even if they hadn't found a job yet.

I appreciate your willingness to listen to a few scenarios that I've personally experienced:

1. When people apply for a job, it often takes more than 10 days for them to hear back. An example is an immigrant who is now fully employed at a local hospital, who applied for the job and didn't hear back for three months.
2. Immigrants, with excellent credentials and applicable work experiences from their home countries, encounter difficulties in aligning their qualifications with local requirements.
3. Human Resources at employers must navigate additional steps when considering an applicant who is an immigrant. This can take more than 10 days, at no fault of Human Resources or the job applicant.
4. Individuals who are new to Maine need assistance from organizations that are understaffed, and it can take longer than 10 days to get that assistance.

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5. Many entry-level jobs available to immigrants require on-site job training which often isn't full-time work.

Considering these obstacles, especially language and cultural differences, it is evident that individuals, may require much more than 10 days to secure stable employment after receiving work authorization and need more support to meet their nutritional needs. For many low-income individuals, missing just one or two paychecks can lead to food insecurity and homelessness. SNAP is the safety net to fill the gap between receiving work authorization and finding employment.

As immigrants, we deeply value the opportunity to contribute to our communities and pursue a better life here in America. Therefore, I implore you to afford us more than a mere 10 days to ensure our basic rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Sincerely,

Khadija Ahmed

Community Impact Manager for Good Shepherd Food Bank

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