



**Piscataquis Regional Food Center**

76 North St.

Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426

**Testimony In Support of LD 415 An Act to Support Hunger Prevention in Maine**

Good morning Senator Talbot-Ross, Representative Pluecker and members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee. My name is Dolly Perkins and I serve on the Board of Directors of Piscataquis Regional Food Center (PRFC). Thank you for allowing me to speak with you today. Piscataquis Regional Food Center serves one of the most rural and impoverished counties in Maine. I am here today to speak in strong support of LD415 which would provide funding for the Mainers Feeding Mainers program, a critical initiative that not only combats food insecurity but also strengthens our local agricultural economy.

The Mainers Feeding Mainers program strengthens local farms. It provides direct support to small Maine farmers by purchasing fresh, locally grown produce that would otherwise go unsold. At PRFC, we've partnered with several local farms through this initiative, including Marr Pond Farms in Sangerville, Ripley Farm in Dover Foxcroft, and Helios Horse Powered Farm in Guilford, ensuring that their harvests feed our neighbors rather than go to waste.

The Mainers Feeding Mainers program is also invaluable in ensuring that we are feeding our most vulnerable citizens. In Piscataquis County, where food insecurity rates are among the highest in Maine, the produce from Mainers Feeding Mainers is a lifeline. In 2024, PRFC received thousands of pounds of fresh, organic produce from these farms, which was then redistributed throughout the emergency food system in Piscataquis, Penobscot, and Somerset counties.

Mainers Feeding Mainers produce was distributed through food pantries, the Read & Feed program, and through free pop-up farmers markets, all serving low-income areas. This program ensures that families, seniors, and children—especially in remote areas—have access to fresh, nutritious food. The Mainers Feeding Mainers program increases access to healthy food, improving nutrition for people experiencing food insecurity.

The program also ensures the dignity of quality food. The Mainers Feeding Mainers program provides an additional, often overlooked benefit to the people we serve. Too often, individuals and families seeking food assistance feel that they are treated poorly or given food that no one else wanted. While rescued food can be valuable, much of the produce is nearing the end of its shelf life or may be bruised or blemished. In contrast, the Mainers Feeding Mainers program delivers farm-fresh, beautiful, unblemished fruits and vegetables directly from local farms. The fact that people relying on the emergency food system receive this high-quality produce not only increases dignity but also helps eliminate the shame and stigma often associated with food assistance. On a basic human level, this program changes lives.



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I would like to share with you one of our shopper's stories, in their own words, "I have improved my health and lost over 35 pounds because I can now have fresh, organic fruits and vegetables. I couldn't afford them before, and now I can have them every day."

I respectfully urge the committee to continue funding of this valuable program with the passage of LD415. In rural communities across the state, rural communities like ours, this program is more than a fiscal note; it's a bridge between local farms and families who need wholesome, nourishing food.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your consideration of this vital program. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have to the best of my ability and would be happy to make myself available at a work session if requested.