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United Way
of Southern Maine



Good morning, Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee,

My name is Annika Moore, and I am the Advocacy Team Leader at Preble Street. Preble Street's mission is to empower people experiencing problems with homelessness, housing, hunger, and poverty and to advocate for solutions to these issues.

Preble Street strongly supports LD 468 because it will address the immediate and long-term challenges of food insecurity while promoting the consumption of locally grown fruits and vegetables. With 11% of Maine households experiencing food insecurity and looming threats to nutrition programs at the federal level, strengthening our state's efforts to fight food insecurity is more critical than ever.

Preble Street's Food Security Hub distributes thousands of boxes containing essential grocery items to Maine households monthly. When our team asks for client feedback on these boxes, we often receive requests for fruits and vegetables, such as lettuce, tomatoes, onions, strawberries, and blueberries. This is primarily because households that utilize our food boxes do not have enough SNAP benefits or money to afford such goods. Other meal options, such as canned goods, are often cheaper than fresh produce but less healthy. When living on limited income and benefits, individuals and families frequently sacrifice vegetables and fruits for less nutritious options. This bill allows them to use their SNAP benefits at farmers' markets and CSAs to receive bonus points to purchase vegetables and fruits.

12.6% of Maine households use SNAP to help put food on the table. Two-thirds of these SNAP-participating households are in the more rural second congressional district of Maine. The Fund to Address Food Insecurity and Provide Nutrition Incentives would benefit these families by empowering them to access healthy produce while stretching their SNAP benefits to increase their purchasing power.

This bill prioritizes locally grown foods and will, therefore, also bolster Maine's agricultural economy. Supporting local food producers boosts job creation and strengthens communities by ensuring more dollars stay within the state.

We strongly encourage you to pass LD 468 because it will positively impact food security by addressing immediate food needs and building long-term solutions for hunger. By supporting local food systems and ensuring that

50 years of turning hunger and homelessness into opportunity and hope

people have access to nutritious foods, LD 468 promotes sustainable, community-driven solutions to hunger.

Thank you.