



**Testimony of Shelley Megquier, Policy and Research Director, Maine Farmland Trust, to the  
132<sup>nd</sup> Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
March 6, 2025**

Good morning Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. My name is Shelley Megquier and I am testifying today on behalf of Maine Farmland Trust (MFT) in support of LD 468, *An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food*.

MFT is a member-powered statewide organization that works to protect farmland, support farmers, and advance the future of farming. Our goals are to keep agricultural lands working and help farmers and their communities thrive. Since our founding in 1999, MFT has helped to permanently protect farmland in every county in Maine, amounting to nearly 57,000 acres across 345 farms. Our Farm Network includes more than 550 farms that have participated in MFT's programming either through an agricultural easement or through one of our programs. Our main program areas are Farmland Protection, Farmland Access, Stewardship, Farm Business Planning, PFAS Support, Climate Resilience, and Policy and Research.

Nutrition incentive programs in Maine, such as the Maine Harvest Bucks and Farm Fresh Rewards programs, play a crucial role in our local food and farming system because they strengthen access to local foods for community members with limited food budgets, while also contributing to the viability of local farms and food businesses by helping them gain new customers and build sales. MFT regularly hears from farms in our network how much they get out of participating in these programs – both emotionally and financially. Farmers report that these transactions make up a substantial proportion of sales at certain farmers markets, indicating to us that the programs are doing what they are supposed to do to increase access to local foods for food insecure Mainers and to boost sales for farmers.

As background, MFT launched the Farm Fresh Rewards nutrition incentive program in 2016 and collaborated extensively over the years with partner organizations operating the Maine Harvest Bucks program to support the growth and reach of these programs across the state. We were thrilled to partner with Good Shepherd Food Bank to transition the Farm Fresh Rewards program to Good Shepherd in 2022. These programs empower more Maine community members to support the success of our farms and align with strategies contained within *Maine's Roadmap to End Hunger by 2030* to improve nutrition security by supporting and sustaining a diverse and robust local food system.<sup>1</sup>

MFT supports LD 468 because it provides ongoing state funding for Maine nutrition incentive programs, setting them up to expand into more parts of the state and leverage more private and other public dollars directly in support of Maine's residents, farms, and the broader local food economy.

We hope that you will support this bill and help strengthen food security in the state and boost sales for Maine's food and farming businesses. Please let me know if I can answer any questions.

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<sup>1</sup> *Everyone at the Table: Maine's Roadmap to End Hunger by 2030*, Commissioned by Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Goal B, Strategy 4, p. 32 (2022)