



Testimony of Garrett Mason
In Support of LD 468

An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food

Good Morning Sen. Talbot-Ross, Rep. Plucker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. My name is Garrett Mason, I am a resident of Lisbon Falls and a partner with Dirigo Public Affairs. I am here today representing my client, the Maine Farm Bureau.

I am here today on behalf of the Maine Farm Bureau to express our strong support for LD 468. This legislation is an important investment in both Maine's agricultural economy and the well-being of families across our state.

LD 468 provides \$1.2 million annually in ongoing funding for the Fund to Address Food Insecurity and Provide Nutrition Incentives. This funding will allow low-income Mainers to access fresh, local food while simultaneously strengthening market opportunities for Maine farmers. The Maine Farm Bureau is committed to ensuring our farms remain viable, our local economies thrive, and our communities have access to the nutritious foods they need.

Maine farmers work tirelessly to grow high-quality food, however many still struggle with unpredictable markets and food waste. Programs like *Maine Harvest Bucks* and *Farm Fresh Rewards* create a critical link between Maine farms and families who rely on federal nutrition assistance programs such as SNAP. These initiative programs expand markets for local farmers and ensure that Mainers have access to fresh, locally grown produce.

Providing ongoing state funding for these programs will also allow Maine to leverage federal funding. When we invest in these programs, it unlocks additional federal dollars, maximizing the impact of state resources while supporting farmers, families, and allied service agencies.

Maine's commitment to increasing local food consumption is also an important aspect of this bill. The state's Climate Action Plan sets a goal of ensuring that 30 percent of the food consumed in Maine is locally produced by 2030. Supporting local food systems is essential for building resilience in our economy and food supply, particularly in rural areas that are most vulnerable to economic and environmental disruptions.

By investing in nutrition incentives, we are investing in Maine's agricultural economy, reducing food insecurity, and improving public health outcomes. We respectfully urge the committee to support this important legislation and ensure that it becomes law.



Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.