

Apriqot

Testimony of Ken Shapiro, MSW

Founder, Apriqot | Scarborough, Maine Resident

In Support of LD 2040 – An Act to Survey Food Insecurity in Maine

Senator Talbot-Ross, Representative Pluecker, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry:

My name is Ken Shapiro. I am a Maine resident, a public health professional, and the co-founder of Apriqot, a Maine-based data and analytics company that works with health systems, state agencies, and community partners to support better public health decision-making.

I am submitting testimony in strong support of LD 2040. I want to thank Representative Pluecker for his leadership and for bringing forward legislation that is timely, thoughtful, and appropriately scoped.

In my work across Maine, including partnerships with the CDC, MaineHealth, and other statewide stakeholders, I see firsthand how difficult it has become to plan, target, and evaluate food and nutrition efforts using the data currently available. Hunger is one of the most immediate challenges families face, yet the information we rely on to understand food insecurity is often outdated, fragmented, or, given recent federal actions, no longer available. The recent cancellation of the federal food insecurity survey has further limited Maine's ability to understand trends, identify geographic differences, and assess whether major public investments are having their intended impact.

Through a recent collaborative project with MaineHealth, we used existing survey and population-level data to develop household food security estimates, highlighting both the value of partnership and the limits of understanding food insecurity without a consistent, statewide public measurement effort.

At the same time, changes to federal nutrition policy, rising food costs, and persistent challenges in rural communities make timely, Maine-specific information more important than ever. Consistent public measurement assists with the allocation of limited resources and helps us hold ourselves accountable for the goals the Legislature has already endorsed in Maine's Roadmap to End Hunger.

LD 2040 takes a focused and measured approach. It assigns responsibility to an existing state agency, with guidance from an established advisory committee, to institute an annual food insecurity survey and regularly publish a report. Importantly, it does not attempt to design a comprehensive solution in statute or create a new bureaucracy. Instead, it restores the core public function of measurement while leaving future approaches flexible.

This approach aligns with Maine's bipartisan commitments, including LD 1159, Resolve to End Hunger by 2030, the Right to Food Constitutional Amendment, and the Roadmap to End Hunger endorsed by the



Legislature. Without timely and public data, Maine will not know whether these commitments are reducing food insecurity or where course corrections may be needed.

LD 2040 also does this responsibly. The pilot is structured to be privately funded through philanthropy, with minimal fiscal impact on the state, while protecting and strengthening prior investments in nutrition programs and hunger prevention.

Maine is uniquely positioned to lead. We are a small state with a strong culture of collaboration across agencies, health systems, nonprofits, and communities. By restoring consistent measurement, LD 2040 ensures Maine has the information it needs, now and in the future, to make informed decisions about how best to respond to food insecurity.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to support LD 2040. Thank you for your time and your commitment to the people of Maine.

Respectfully submitted,
Ken Shapiro, MSW
Maine Resident

