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Good Shepherd

FOOD BANK OF MAINE

**Testimony for the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
In Support of LD 2004: An Act to Enhance Support of Local Nutrition Incentive Programs by Modifying
the Eligibility Requirements of the Fund to Address Food Insecurity and Provide Nutrition Incentives
Sponsored by Senator Henry Ingwersen**

January 7, 2026

Good afternoon Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, my name is Courtney Kennedy, and I serve as the Nutrition and Education Director at Good Shepherd Food Bank. I am writing in support of LD 2004, which proposes a technical change to the eligibility language in the State budget related to nutrition incentive funding.

LD 2004 does not change the intent of the Local Nutrition Incentive Programs. It would remove the requirement that state funds be used exclusively as a federal match for nutrition incentive programs. This bill does not increase funding levels or create a new program; rather, it updates statutory language to ensure that existing state investments can continue to support nutrition incentive programs regardless of fluctuations or uncertainty in federal funding streams.

Programs such as Maine Harvest Bucks and Farm Fresh Rewards play a vital role in Maine's food system by supporting SNAP households while also strengthening state agriculture. These programs are currently supported in part through federal funding, which often requires a dollar-for-dollar nonfederal match. Given the ongoing uncertainty of federal appropriations, maintaining a rigid match requirement places otherwise-allocated state dollars at risk of going unused.

By updating the language, LD 2004 ensures that the current \$600,000 state allocation can continue to be used to support nutrition incentives that directly benefit Maine farmers, food producers, and local retailers—whether or not federal match requirements can be met in a given year. This flexibility protects the state's investment in agriculture and local food economies.

Maine Harvest Bucks and Farm Fresh Rewards are proven tools that benefit both consumers and producers. Updating the eligibility language ensures that state funding continues to work as intended—supporting Maine agriculture and local food access—without being constrained by external federal requirements.

These programs:

- Support hundreds of small and mid-sized Maine farms, food producers, and locally owned food retailers
- Keep food dollars circulating in Maine's economy

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- Strengthen the connection between nutrition assistance programs and state agriculture

At Good Shepherd Food Bank, our mission is to eliminate hunger in Maine by increasing access to nutritious food and strengthening community partnerships. Through programs like Farm Fresh Rewards, SNAP shoppers are able to purchase more locally grown fruits and vegetables, directly supporting Maine farms while improving household food security.

For these reasons, I urge you to support LD 2004. This bill is a practical, forward-looking adjustment that protects Maine's investment in nutrition incentives and the farmers who rely on them.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Courtney Kennedy

Director of Nutrition

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