



Permanent Commission RACIAL, INDIGENOUS & TRIBAL POPULATIONS

Testimony in Support of LD 2122

An Act to Prevent Negative Impacts from Federal Funding Changes to and Fund Eligibility Determinations and Outreach for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

March 5, 2026

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Sam Zuckerman. I am the Policy Coordinator of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous, and Tribal Populations. I am here today on behalf of the Permanent Commission's Policy Committee to testify in support of LD 2122, "An Act to Prevent Negative Impacts from Federal Funding Changes to and Fund Eligibility Determinations and Outreach for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program."

The Permanent Commission's Policy Committee broadly supports legislation aimed at addressing food insecurity in Maine. Access to healthy, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food is at the center of all human wellbeing and all food insecurity is cause for concern, but patterns of food insecurity fall unevenly across our communities, with notable disparities among racial groups. This has many causes, including a lack of accessible food retailers,¹ lack of access to land for farming and cultivation,² and wealth and income inequality.³ This bill would help to bridge the gaps to food access that people from these communities face by getting funding to community-based organizations to facilitate outreach and coordination to help people access the benefits they qualify for. Community-based organizations are often best positioned to know

¹ Larson, N. I., Story, M. T., & Nelson, M. C. (2009). Neighborhood environments: disparities in access to healthy foods in the US. *American journal of preventive medicine*, 36(1), 74-81.

² Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous, and Tribal Populations. 2022. Land Access for Indigenous and African American Farmers in Maine.

³ Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous, and Tribal Populations. 2024. State of Racial Disparities Report.

who needs help and the most effective way to get it to them. And this bill would also give peace of mind to people who rely on SNAP benefits by creating a contingency fund to ensure continued access to those benefits.

Food insecurity impacts all Mainers, with 1 in 8 people and 1 in 5 children facing hunger in Maine in 2022.⁴ But Mainers of color face over twice the rate of food insecurity that white Mainers do.⁵ Food insecurity rates in households of color are 28% and in Black households are 40%,⁶ while in white households they are only 13%.⁷ These disparities are also seen among children.⁸ And our Wabanaki neighbors face additional barriers to food security stemming from the theft of their land and the refusal by the state to recognize their sovereignty.⁹ Increased resources to help people who rely on SNAP access these benefits will help to ensure that people are supported when they are most vulnerable. When everyone is fed, we all benefit because people are able to bring their full attention and energy to their jobs, their families, and their communities.

Thank you for your time and attention. I urge you to vote in support of this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions.

⁴ Feeding America. (n.d.). Maine. <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/maine>

⁵ Hall, L. (2023, October 26). Food Insecurity Increased in 2022, With Severe Impact on Households With Children and Ongoing Racial Inequities. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/food-insecurity-increased-in-2022-with-severe-impact-on-households-with-children-and-ongoing>

⁶ Graham, G. (2021, March 28). Pandemic reveals race disparities around hunger in Maine. Portland Press Herald. <https://www.pressherald.com/2021/03/28/pandemic-reveals-race-disparities-around-hunger-in-maine/>

⁷ Myall, J. (2019). Issue Brief: Food Insecurity in Maine. Maine Center for Economic Policy. <https://www.mecep.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/MECEP-Hunger-Issue-Brief-2019.pdf>

⁸ Rabbitt, M.P., Hales, L.J., Burke, M.P., & Coleman-Jensen, A. (2023). Household food security in the United States in 2022. US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

⁹ Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Tribal Populations. (2022). Land access for Indigenous and African American farmers in Maine.; Bennett, Z. M. (2017). "A Means of Removing Them Further from Us": The Struggle for Waterpower on New England's Eastern Frontier. *The New England Quarterly*. 90(4), 540-560. https://doi.org/10.1162/tneq_a_00640; Kalt, J.P., Medford, A.B., & Taylor, J.B. (2022). Economic and Social Impacts of Restrictions on the Applicability of Federal Indian Policies to the Wabanaki Nations in Maine. The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development.