

**Testimony of Anna Korsen, Full Plates Full Potential**  
**Support for 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**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I'm Anna Korsen, Deputy Director with Full Plates Full Potential, a statewide non-profit working to address childhood food insecurity in Maine by maximizing access to federally funded USDA nutrition programs like SNAP and school meals. We are a member of Hunger Free Maine, a coalition formed to advocate for policies to advance Maine's Roadmap to End Hunger. I also serve as the co-chair of the Ending Hunger in Maine Advisory Committee, and Full Plates is a contracted SNAP Outreach organization with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). My testimony today is not reflective of the views of the Department, nor am I here representing them.

**I am here today testifying 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. We'd like to thank Speaker Fecteau for his leadership to protect SNAP for Maine in the face of federal cuts.**

**HR 1 made it harder to get and keep SNAP.** This bill proposes critical solutions to strengthen and protect Maine's SNAP program by:

1. Establishing a fund to ensure Maine can continue to provide SNAP benefits during emergencies or when the federal government withholds or cuts benefits
2. Supporting Maine DHHS to lower the state's Payment Error Rate (PER) through investments in technology, staff, and community engagement to improve reporting experience for SNAP users and to ensure stability of the program in light of federal changes

**The facts are clear that SNAP matters to Maine because too many Mainers can't afford their basic needs.** We witnessed the fear and chaos created in Maine households and communities last November at the prospect of lost SNAP benefits, and we saw that Maine's state budget has no straightforward mechanism to replace the nearly \$30 million in federal benefits that feed Mainers every month. The SNAP contingency fund proposed in this bill will ensure that Maine can step up in the event that the federal government withholds SNAP benefits, like they threatened to in November. This administration has demonstrated that they are willing to weaponize SNAP as a political pawn, and Maine must be prepared to fill the gap left behind when the federal government doesn't fulfill its legal obligation to provide grocery benefits to households with low-income.

**This bill also aims to address some significant needs in Maine’s SNAP program to lower Maine’s Payment Error Rate (PER)** by improving efficiency and accuracy in both agency and client errors - and reducing the incoming cost shift from the federal government. It also includes protections and improvements for SNAP participants - another critical element to accurate payments and a stable SNAP program. As you know, Medicaid has statutory requirements and federal funding for community engagement and communications to providers to support users. The SNAP program has a similar community engagement program called SNAP Outreach, an opportunity for the Maine Department of Health and Human Services Office for Family Independence (OFI) to contract with community organizations to provide education and information about SNAP as well as direct application and reporting assistance to SNAP participants. SNAP outreach work is funded through a 50/50 match between federal dollars and SNAP outreach partner organizations.

Until 2024, Maine was one of the only states in the country that did not contract with community partners for SNAP outreach services, and community outreach activities and capacity were limited in Maine. Forming partnerships through Maine’s SNAP Outreach Plan presented an opportunity to build capacity for higher quality, expanded outreach and application assistance in Maine and to leverage the investments of willing community partners to bring more federal outreach dollars into Maine.

In 2025, Maine piloted the first contract with Full Plates Full Potential to increase much needed SNAP knowledge and alignment in communication between OFI, community organizations, and Mainers with low income facing food insecurity in the state.

Full Plates and OFI worked together closely to get the relationship off the ground and ensure the pilot was successful. Full Plates’ contract with OFI was renewed for FY26, with the addition of subcontracts with Midcoast Hunger Prevention Program and Midcoast Hospital. OFI has also contracted with 8 additional SNAP outreach partner organizations, including food pantries, farmers markets, organizations serving older adults, and other trusted community organizations serving diverse geographic regions across our state.<sup>1</sup>

Outreach partners are increasingly an essential part of Maine’s SNAP program to ensure timely communication and customer service. **OFI received 46,464 calls about SNAP in January 2026 alone, with an average wait time for callers of an hour.**

One SNAP user told an Outreach partner that she took time off work for a scheduled interview with OFI and couldn’t get through on the call line. With help and clarification from the food pantry assisting her, she might have avoided a missed day of work.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fullplates.org/snap-outreach>



Organizations conducting SNAP outreach and application assistance are already fielding a lot of questions about changes in eligibility and new work reporting requirements due to HR 1. These changes are real and significant and ultimately leading to increased food insecurity across our state.

Full Plates convenes a SNAP outreach network, and through that, we know that many of the organizations participating in SNAP outreach are already stretching limited resources to their maximum capacity. They are supporting community members facing increased healthcare, food, and housing costs, with gutted federal support and an environment marked by fear and chaos. Full Plates joined this work because SNAP is a lifeline for so many Maine children and their families, and SNAP enrollment helps Maine receive its fair share of federal funding for school meals and summer meal programs.

**SNAP outreach work through community engagement is new in Maine, critical to support the effort to lower the state's PER, and incredibly fragile in the face of federal cuts.** Due to the incoming administrative cost shift next October, the federal contribution to support SNAP outreach will be reduced to 25% and contracted SNAP outreach partners will need to fund 75% of the work from their own budgets. LD 2122 proposes the creation of a state matching grant to support this critical community engagement effort, similar to Mainecare, and draw down additional funding from USDA. Without financial support, many organizations won't be able to continue the work at a time when work requirements and rules are changing significantly and causing confusion and benefit loss in communities.

SNAP helps put food on the table for over 170,000 Mainers. We must protect SNAP at a time when many are struggling to afford basic groceries and necessities. Hunger shouldn't be up for debate. LD 2122 is the first of many responsible choices we can make to protect Mainers, and I urge you to support this important bill.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue. I'd be happy to answer any questions you have and can be available for the work session.

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