

**TESTIMONY OF SUSANNA RICHER
IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 95
"RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine To Establish a Right to Food"
Committee On Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
February 23, 2021**

Senator Dill, Representative O'Neil, and distinguished members of the Committee:

Thank you for considering my testimony in opposition to L.D. 95 " RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine To Establish a Right to Food."

It is indisputable that access to food is essential to life and that as a state, we must, even more so in these times, address hunger and food insecurity in our community. However, I do not feel that this resolution is necessary to achieve that goal and am concerned, that if passed, it may also have unintended consequences.

Unnecessary

After reviewing the report resulting from last session's, LD 1159 – "Resolve to End Hunger in Maine by 2030" it appears that many qualified parties came together as a first step in forming a strategic plan to address food security in Maine. I support the completion and implementation of that plan and feel that is direction Maine resources should be focused on. There are many federal and state resources in place to help those in need and a good initial plan to further expand. As a result, I believe the proposed resolution to be unnecessary.

As important as it is to recognize a growing need for food access in Maine due to COVID, it is equally as important to acknowledge that Mainer's step up consistently to help those in their community who need it to fill gaps in existing services. This is one of the reasons I love Maine so much. Last night I read an article about a newly formed organization, Presenté that launched the Food Brigade, which now distributes 15,000 pounds of food to 2,200 people in Portland, Lewiston, and surrounding towns. This is a barrier-free service – meaning no paperwork or screening protocols. If you are hungry and in need, they will provide food for you. That is the way it should be. This is just one of many resources in Maine to connect those in need with food and support services.

Unintended consequences

Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, I believe the ambiguous language of this resolution may lead to unintended and unforeseeable consequences which may include conflicts with and/or confusion about state animal welfare laws, wildlife protection laws and food safety regulations.

As a community, we need to provide access to nutritious food for everyone, along with education, healthcare, and job resources. Although we need to improve, in comparison to other states, I think Maine does a good job of providing and is constantly working to do more. I do not think we need a constitutional resolution to require this access.

In conclusion, I urge members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture Conservation and Forestry to vote "ought not to pass" on L.D. 95: " RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine To Establish a Right to Food."

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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