



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Representative Kyle R. Bailey in Support of LD 1299 Before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Sen. Dill, Rep. O’Neil and distinguished members on the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 1299, “An Act To Permit Emergency Funding for Food Banks When a State of Emergency is Declared.”

You already know the facts: 13% of Mainers live in poverty and 13.6% of Maine households are food insecure. For Maine seniors, the numbers grow more worrisome with 16% of our elderly population at risk of going hungry. Finally, for Maine children—and I know you will agree—the numbers are tragic and unacceptable with 18% living in poverty and 1 in 5 food insecure.

In good economic times, 10% of Maine’s population participates in SNAP and 37% of Maine’s food insecure population fails to qualify for public assistance.¹ What do those numbers look like in bad times, when the bottom falls out of the economy and unemployment increases? Are we doing all that we can as a state to ensure that no man, woman or children goes hungry?

I support critical investments in workforce development, public education, transportation and health care, among other areas. I also recognize that many of these investments must look like luxuries to people—our neighbors and our constituents—who cannot afford to feed themselves and their children today, or who fear that they may not be able to do so tomorrow.

We have considerable work to do on this policy area. LD 1299 is no silver bullet, but it would automatically trigger emergency funding for food banks when a state of emergency is declared to do more to fight hunger and poverty in our state. I ask you to support this important legislation and thank you for considering my testimony.

¹ <https://www.gsfb.org/hunger-in-maine/>