



January 18, 2022

To: Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry

Testimony in support of LD 174: “An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Ending Hunger by 2030 Advisory Group.”

Senator Dill, Representative O’Neill, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, My name is Quinn Gormley and I serve as the Executive Director of the Maine Transgender Network. Since 2005, MaineTransNet has been Maine’s sole organization specifically dedicated to supporting and advocating for the needs of transgender Mainers and those who love and care for us. We support legislation with the potential to make substantial contributions to the health and welfare of our community through economic improvement, increases in safety, and the meeting of basic needs.

We are here today in support of LD 174, “An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Ending Hunger by 2030 Advisory Group.” We would like to extend our gratitude to the sponsor, Rep. Pluecker, Commissioner Beal, and the members of the advisory group for their dedicated work creating this plan.

As noted in the draft plan, nationally, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender adults are nearly twice as likely as their straight and cisgender peers to live in food insecure households. Data from our own 2021 Maine Transgender Community Survey found alarming trends in food security and access among our community including:

- 12% of transgender Mainers receive benefits from the SNAP program
- 7.1% regularly access the services of a food pantry
- And most significant, only 53% of transgender Mainers report being able to consistently afford sufficient food for themselves on those in their care.

This final statistic becomes more direr when we use intersectional analyses between disability and transgender status. Approximately 64% of transgender Mainers have a disability of some kind, and a meager 30% of them report being able to consistently afford sufficient food.

Transgender Mainers face a variety of barriers to food security and accessing safety net programs. In rural Maine, for example, many food pantries are religiously affiliated often times with institutions that are not affirming of transgender people, or who are specifically hostile to us. Often, we are unable to tell the difference between safe and exclusionary religious organizations and avoid them as a matter of safety.

Document incongruence can complicate access to state and federal safety net programs when gender markers and legal names are inconsistent between documents such as state and federal IDs, Social Security numbers, of the name and gender on record in often outdated government databases. When transgender Mainers are able to access safety net programs, they are often defensive of the security that they offer, and must protect themselves from losing the benefits due to phenomena such as the “benefits cliffs” identified in the Advisory Group report.

Finally, transgender Mainers face barriers related to economic security more broadly. This is often related to discrimination in hiring and promoting practices, social bias, and transphobia. A disproportionate number of transgender Mainers find themselves working in low and lower-income jobs. MaineTransNet applauds the work of the Advisory Group in naming the systemic contributions of economic inequality on food security. Food is among our most basic needs, and our access to it is determined largely by our income. Any plan for food security that fails to deal with this reality will be successful in eliminating food insecurity.

Thank you again, and we urge you to support this proposed plan.