



## Testimony of Anna Korsen, Full Plates Full Potential In Support of LD 174

Senator Dill, Representative O’Neil, and the esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. My name is Anna Korsen, Advocacy Director with Full Plates Full Potential. [Full Plates Full Potential](#) is a statewide non-profit on a mission to end child hunger in Maine by strengthening and expanding child nutrition programs. We provide technical and financial assistance to schools and community organizations to help feed kids now, while advocating for the systemic changes necessary to ensure that all Maine’s kids have consistent access to nutritious meals.

Today, I’m submitting testimony in support of LD 174 and urge the committee to implement and invest in the recommendations put forth in Maine’s Plan to End Hunger. We would like to thank Representative Pluecker for sponsoring this bill, Senator Hickman for putting forth the original legislation that initiated this planning process, and the Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry for their leadership in guiding the process forward.

As a participant in the Ending Hunger by 2030 task force, I can attest to the inclusive and collaborative process that brought diverse stakeholders together to develop the strategic plan in front of you. The recommendations included in the report reflect the expertise of people with lived experience, as well as those working to address issues of hunger, poverty, housing, and public health, and representatives from state agencies and the food system, and together represent a comprehensive path forward to reach Maine’s bold goal of Ending Hunger by 2030.

I would like to specifically highlight a few of the recommendations that would go far in addressing the barriers to accessing services and programs that are critical to increasing food security, including:

- Seek to maximize participation in federal nutrition programs including school nutrition programs, taking special care to foster initiatives and partnerships that address barriers to access and cultural relevance for disproportionately impacted communities.
- Advocate for nutrition program eligibility criteria and definitions of poverty that would encompass all Maine residents who are food insecure
- Coordinate and invest in the establishment of a secure, user-centered, single point of enrollment for state and federal benefits programs.
- Ensure cross-enrollment for programs for which public benefits recipients are likely eligible

Additionally, Maine took the historic step last year to ensure no child goes hungry at school ever again by passing School Meals for All legislation, and now the Administration and Legislature have the opportunity to put this new law into action by fully funding the policy in the state budget.

In closing, Maine’s Plan to End Hunger reflects the needs of Maine people and addresses many root-cause systemic barriers to food security. I urge the committee to implement these carefully crafted recommendations and invest in the continuation of this important work.

