



# Maine Credit Union League

## **Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee**

### **Testimony of the Maine Credit Union League In Support of LD174: An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Ending Hunger by 2030 Advisory Group**

**January 18, 2022**

Senator Dill, Representative O’Neil, and distinguished members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee, my name is Todd Mason, and I am the President and CEO of the Maine Credit Union League. The Maine Credit Union League proudly represents all of Maine’s 52 credit unions, who serve over 720,000 members and hold over \$10.6 billion in total assets. I am submitting this testimony in support of LD174: An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Ending Hunger by 2030 Advisory Group.

While ending hunger is a pervasive issue in Maine, it is a solvable one. Maine’s credit unions have been part of the solution since 1990 through our Campaign for Ending Hunger. Since its inception, we have raised over \$10 million for this important cause with much needed funds going to local food pantries around the state, schools, Full Plates | Full Potential, Good Shepherd Food Bank, and others helping with this critical cause. Because money is not enough alone to solve the problem, we recently partnered with Good Shepherd Food Bank and New Ventures Maine to pilot bringing financial education and support directly into food banks to begin addressing the needs and root causes of those who are food insecure.

The reality that money alone, nor any single thing, will solve hunger is what makes the work of the Ending Hunger by 2030 Advisory Group and its recommendations so powerful. I served as a proud member of the Advisory Group, including its Finance Support Team, along with a diverse cross-section of Mainers. The group spanned across government officials, community leaders, academics, philanthropists, business leaders and, importantly, those that are experiencing or have experienced food insecurity in their lives.

By taking a holistic approach, the Advisory Group’s five goals of addressing infrastructure, access, economic security, amplifying the voices of impacted people, and equity provide the necessary framework and actions needed to solve hunger. As an example, the strategy to “Enlist the Private Sector” under the goal of Economic Security,

encourages public/private partnerships. One idea is to create a private-sector toolkit to help HR professionals and business managers identify and help address hunger within their own organizations. Another idea is to expand education and training programs, something Maine credit unions are doing with the Maine Energy Marketers Association and the Maine Motor Transport Association by providing low-cost financing for their training programs, which then can lead to good jobs in the energy and trucking industries. Other ideas include expanding internships and apprenticeships, broadband access, and the list goes on.

What makes these and other recommendations from the Ending Hunger by 2030 Advisory Group special is not that they are new, though some are. What makes them special is the people and processes that brought them together in a comprehensive plan. There is no single action or group that can end hunger. It takes a common agenda, shared measurements of progress, mutually reinforcing activities, strong communications, and a village to make the collective impact needed to end hunger.

In closing, I thank Commissioner Beal, Craig Lapine, Special Assistant to the Commissioner, my fellow Advisory Group members and all those involved in this important initiative. LD174: An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Ending Hunger by 2030 Advisory Group has the support of the Maine Credit Union League and encourages this committee to support it as well.