



Preble Street

Turning Hunger and Homelessness into Opportunity and Hope

January 18th, 2022

Florence House

Huston Commons

Logan Place

Anti-Trafficking Services

Veterans Housing Services

Rapid Re-Housing

Emergency Food Programs

Teen Center

Joe Kreisler Teen Shelter

First Place

Street Outreach Collaborative

Advocacy

Maine Hunger Initiative

Health Services

MMC-Preble Street

Learning Collaborative

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Good morning Senator Dill, Representative O'Neil, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry:

My name is Izzy Ostrowski, and I'm the Maine Hunger Initiative Social Change Advocate at [Preble Street](https://preblestreet.org), a human services anti-poverty agency with over a dozen programs and services provided across the state. I am here today to testify in support of LD 174: An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Ending Hunger by 2030 Advisory Group.

Maine is facing a hunger crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated issues of homelessness, housing insecurity, and food insecurity for individuals and families. In our programs, we've seen a stark increase of people accessing emergency shelter, prepared meals, and food from our food pantry. Preble Street served one million meals in 2020 and 2021- a massive increase from the yearly average of 625,000 meals served in years prior. Now, more than ever, people are struggling to make ends meet and purchase a variety of food for themselves and, for many, their families. As Maine ranks fifth in the nation for highest levels of food insecurity¹, we must ensure that the recommendations of the Advisory Group are enacted to address both immediate need and the root causes of hunger and food insecurity.

Food insecurity is a racial justice issue. Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color in Maine face higher rates of hunger and food insecurity. Even prior to the pandemic, Black households in Maine had rates of hunger that were three times higher than all other households². This legislation is needed to address these disproportionate impacts and further racial equity in our state.

Preble Street supports the recommendations put forth by the Advisory Group as well as the inclusive and intentional process from which the recommendations were developed. The plan reflects the lived experience of those most impacted by hunger and food insecurity in our state and the collaboration between stakeholders who are leading anti-hunger efforts.

The recommendations reflect that hunger is intersectional. Ending hunger requires robust investments in federal nutrition programs, housing, healthcare, and other factors that impact overall wellbeing and access to a variety of culturally appropriate food. By investing in these recommendations, Maine has the opportunity to invest in our most vulnerable communities. When Mainers have access to a variety of food, our communities thrive and grow. When our neighbors struggle with hunger, the impact on our state is dire and far reaching. For this reason, Preble Street urges you to vote in support of this bill and implement these strategic recommendations. Thank you for your time and consideration.