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Sen. Dill and Rep. O'Neil,

Thank you for the chance to present to you this bill “An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Ending Hunger by 2030 Advisory Group.” This Advisory Group and the resulting report were paid for by private foundations and companies that want to work with the government to begin to look at the issue of food insecurity and hunger in a new way, one that focuses not just on food, but on how to improve our economy so that it works for everyone. The plan itself speaks to the work that has been done over the last 8 months by DACF better than I can, so I am going to quote from the Exec. Summary of the plan.

“Maine’s Plan to End Hunger by 2030 aims at the root causes of hunger and food insecurity in our state.

This approach was indicated in the authorizing legislation, 2019’s “Resolve to End Hunger in Maine by 2030” (LD 1159), and explicitly endorsed in the unanimously accepted “Ending Hunger in Maine by 2030” Report to the 129th Legislature. The development of this plan spanned 28 months and engaged more than 200 people across the state, including people with lived experience of food insecurity, emergency food providers, non-profit organizations, legislators, representatives from numerous State Departments and the Governor’s Office, and more. To understand this plan and its recommendations, it’s critical to grasp a seeming paradox: food security in Maine has little to

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do with food. Or, more accurately, the causes of food insecurity have little to do with a scarcity of food. Food insecurity is most often a function of economic insecurity; hunger is a symptom of poverty.

The aim of this plan ultimately is to end hunger, and to do so by adding to our approach root causes strategies that prevent the problem from happening in the first place. That's why the plan's overwhelming focus is on income and resources—and the forces that hold income and resource inequality in place. When we create a robust and equitable economy for those who can work, and a user-centered and adequate social safety net for everyone, we will end hunger. This plan leverages expertise from across State government. Contributing Departments include Education; Economic and Community Development; Health and Human Service; Transportation; Labor; the Office of the State Economist; and The Governor's Office on Policy, Innovation, and the Future. These policymakers were joined by a broad swath of legislators, nonprofit and business leaders, educators, policy experts, and concerned Maine residents. Importantly, contributors included Mainers with lived and living experience of hunger. This Maine-based expertise was deepened by research into best practices and success stories from anti-hunger work in other communities and around the globe.

The result is a plan rooted in:

- evidence-based solutions to hunger,
- the unique nature of the problem in Maine, and
- the priorities of Maine people.

Each year we incur \$709 million in hunger-related costs from lost productivity, increased need for special education services, preventable health conditions, and more. That's on top of the \$370 million spent on feeding people. If we allocated resources to end hunger rather than to treat it, we estimate we would need far less than the \$1 billion currently

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being spent—directly and indirectly—and we’d create more flourishing and joyful communities in the process.”

The work of our committee over the next few weeks will be to nail down exactly how the Executive branch will go about implementing the strategies of the plan. DACF is asking to move the work of the plan to the Governor’s Office of Planning, Innovation and the Future (GOPIF.) There the cross-departmental work of the bill can be executed by bringing together resources and data from across the state to do the big work dreamed of by the original legislation. We will need to work out what sort of oversight we want as a committee of the process, and any statutory expectations we might have for that office.

We have a strong bill draft to start our work from. The Senate President did not want us to put off the public hearing any farther, so I am asking for the patience of the committee as we continue to draft amendments to the bill before the work session so that we can make sure the bill is doing the work we want it to do, and we can strategize with GOPIF to make sure they have the resources they need to get the work done.

Food insecurity and hunger is a problem with a solution. We have the resources to address it. This bill marshalls those resources and creates a central location from which the State can coordinate the work of making sure not one of our citizens go to sleep worried for where their next meal is coming from.

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