

TESTIMONY OF TOBIN WILLIAMSON SUPPORTING LD 174:

An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Ending Hunger by 2030 Advisory Group

Public hearing scheduled for Tuesday, Jan 18, 2022 at 11:00 am

Sponsor: **Representative Bill PLUECKER of Warren**

Link: <https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=HP0127&item=1&snum=130>

I am here to testify in support of LD174 on behalf of the board and members of the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC), a coalition of more than 80 member organizations with a commitment to advancing and defending the rights of immigrants. Our mission is to improve the legal, social and economic conditions experienced by Maine's immigrants – enhancing their lives while strengthening Maine – through advocacy, information sharing and collaboration both through and among our member organizations. We actively prioritize the voices, perspectives, and decision-making of New Mainer communities as we acknowledge the status quo of systems that consistently disadvantage them. MIRC envisions policies that will not exacerbate inequities across BIPOC groups, including divisions across the country of origin, socioeconomic status, state geography, language, and immigration status.

MIRC is a council member of the "Everyone at the Table: Ending Hunger in Maine by 2030" initiative. We believe ensuring no Mainers go hungry is a valiant cause, and we are happy to be part of this important movement. For food insecurity to improve at a structural level, the systems and policies that influence poverty – and, thus, food insecurity – must also be addressed.

In my personal experience (growing up in a single-parent household in a poor region of the country) and in my work experience (in constituent services and workforce development), I have seen first-hand the ways that hunger and food insecurity are interconnected with the systems and structures that influence our lives. If your job pays \$13/hour but the only childcare you can find is \$15/hour, it does not make much sense to keep that job. If you need to take a bus to healthcare appointments but the bus schedule is sporadic, it can be tough to make your meetings on time. If you require emergency dental care but do not have dental insurance, you may have to sacrifice quality food choices at the grocery store to afford your dental care. The systems are interrelated.

That being said, we are very encouraged by how the Ending Hunger by 2030 Advisory Group has recognized how these structural barriers are connected to food insecurity, and has subsequently placed an emphasis on centering the voices of those with lived and living experience in telling the story of hunger and finding solutions.

Therefore, the Maine Immigrant Rights Coalition (MIRC) supports LD174 this bill and urges the Maine Legislators to pass it.

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