

Kim Schutsky
Wolf Pine Farm - Alfred, Maine
LD 568

Hello and thank you for accepting written testimony for LD568.

My name is Kim and I work for Wolf Pine Farm in Alfred. This year will be my 11th year managing the farm's SNAP program and I have been managing our involvement with Maine Harvest Bucks since that initiative's inception.

One of our long-term ongoing goals as a CSA farm has been to ensure that good food is accessible to all. To reach that goal, we have accepted SNAP as a payment method for more than 11 years. We maintain a robust scholarship fund, funded by shareholder and other individual donations, to help those who might not otherwise be able to afford a CSA share. Thirdly, we have been involved with and actively promoted the Maine Harvest Bucks initiative since it was in its planning stages.

In 2022, a whopping 12% of our shareholder base paid for their vegetable CSA share with SNAP. 49 veggie shares - all paid for through a combination of SNAP and reimbursed funds from Maine Harvest Bucks. Maine Harvest Bucks has been a game changer for our shareholders who pay with SNAP. There have been guaranteed incentive funds available to lower the cost of their veggie share EVERY year. No uncertainty. No applications. No questions. Simply a lower price point for any veggie share paid for with an EBT card with SNAP benefits.

In response to renewing for 2023, Angel from Sanford shared the following: "Thank you so much! We really can't tell you how appreciative we are or thank you enough for you guys helping us get fresh food! We've never felt better and I have learned so much about different foods because of your programs. We are even starting a little garden this year because my girls want to try growing a few things. I just wanted to let you know how much we love the food and what you guys do for all of us." This gratitude was unsolicited and came from Angel's heart. She simply wanted to share her thoughts. Her timing was impeccable (coming just prior to this hearing), and I asked her if I could share her words with the state legislature, to which she replied, "Yes please do share my quote. This program is so important."

It is my understanding that federal funding for programs such as Maine Harvest Bucks is lower than in previous years, putting such an important initiative on rocky ground. This much-needed state funding is crucial to the continued success and health of families in our community. I would like to note the importance of ongoing funding for the program. If we can count on funding to continue year after year then we can plan to continue growing our program so that it impacts more people each year.

Please pass this bill. It means so much to so many.

Sincerely - Kim Schutsky for Wolf Pine Farm, and on behalf of the dozens of families this funding would benefit.