

Testimony of Marybeth Stocking of Springvale, ME before the 131st Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry.

Good afternoon members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. My name is Marybeth Stocking and I co-own Two Toad Farm in Springvale, ME, and am the volunteer manager of the Sanford Farmers' Market, celebrating its 14th year feeding our community.

The Sanford Market's success relies heavily on its customers' access to both the SNAP program, and the Maine Harvest Bucks incentive program. In our summer season last year, we saw just under \$10,000 in SNAP get spent on our locally-produced fruits, vegetables, and foods at our market. Because of the Maine Harvest Buck incentive program, our farmers and food producers were able to see another \$4,000 spent by these same customers at our market. These programs give the market a significant boost in sales, support our small businesses, and provide fresh, local food to a portion of our community that would likely be excluded from access to these products by financial constraints. In a lower-income neighborhood like Sanford, this program ensures the town can continue to host a vibrant farmers' market, as farmers and food producers can make a decent living by selling there, rather than travelling across the county to wealthier towns' markets. Without this program, farmers' markets in towns like Sanford would not survive, and only markets in rich towns like Kennebunk will survive. We ALL need to eat!!! We ALL also deserve access to fresh, healthy, and locally-sourced foods.

The ongoing funding of these programs that LD 568 would provide is vital for the success of both farmers' markets and food producers in low-income towns, and the continued access for low-income residents to fresh, locally-produced foods.

Marybeth Stocking
Sanford Farmers' Market
LD 568

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