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LD 568

Testimony of Lynda Young of Washington, in support of LD 568 - An Act to Provide Funding for the Fund to Address Food Insecurity and Provide Nutrition Incentives

Good afternoon. My name is Lynda "Chase" Young of Washington, Me. As a local family here in Maine we have used Harvest Bucks off and on as part of the SNAP program for at least 4 to 5 years since we first learned about it. As our family and benefits have changed at times I have really appreciated using Harvest Bucks to extend my food budget, when we have only gotten small SNAP benefits. Knowing that I could go to the local farmers market and not only support my local farmers and their families, but I could also extend my benefits and bring more food home to my family. I have been able to buy more produce, often organic, always in season and local to feed my growing family.

Produce often hits higher rates of inflation than any other part of the grocery store and knowing that I could go to the farmers market and get local bread, honey, meat, dairy and then get harvest bucks to get produce and in the spring seedlings to grow food in my own garden has been such a blessing. The food is better than I can get at the grocery store and because of this program the cost of the produce allows me to keep my family healthier, with all the good nutrients that are in fruits and vegetables.

Farmers markets are also community building, with activities for children, allowing them to learn where their food comes from and who makes it. This means my kids are more invested in the food that we buy, and are more likely to try new things, help cook the food, and not waste it.

I also find the fact that harvest bucks can be used for seedlings in the spring and early summer such a boon. As a busy mom having those seedlings that can go straight in the garden, again they are often organic, heritage and grown locally, helps us grow more of our food as well. We share our bounty with friends and neighbors to help keep the cycle going.

Please continue to support this program. Produce can quite literally be the most expensive part of a family's grocery bill, and yet it is also where the most nutrition is. I like being able to support my local farmers, and without harvest bucks I would have much fewer resources to do that with and we will have to rely on what we can grow in our own small garden and what produce we can find on sale, which will not be as good as what we can get using Maine Harvest Bucks.

Thank you.