



**Testimony of Anna Korsen, Full Plates Full Potential
In Support of LD 1612**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. My name is Anna Korsen, Advocacy and Implementation Director with Full Plates Full Potential, a statewide non-profit working to address childhood food insecurity by providing technical and financial assistance to schools and communities to help feed kids now, while advocating for the systemic changes necessary to ensure that all Maine children have consistent access to nutritious meals. Our strategy is to maximize access to USDA Child Nutrition Programs - commonly known as school lunch, school breakfast, afterschool meals, and summer meals. However, we know that these programs alone cannot end child hunger. We partner with Preble Street and other anti-hunger organizations and work together as members of the Maine Food Security Coalition on solutions to address food insecurity across our state.

Today, I'm submitting testimony in support of LD 1612 "An Act to Address Food Security and Support Local Agriculture". We would like to thank Speaker Talbot Ross for introducing this bill and supporting the good work of Preble Street. The investment proposed in this bill is critical and will go a long way to address food insecurity across our state.

Maine has the highest rate of childhood food insecurity in New England, with 1 in 6 kids¹ lacking consistent access to nutrition. For many students, school meals are the only reliable source of food and the most nutritious meals they receive², and Maine's historic law to feed every child at school at no cost has helped to increase access to food during the school day. However, when school is out on weekends, during vacations, on snowdays, and over the summer, children living in food insecure households lose access to those reliable meals. Many schools and communities operate summer meal programs that are meant to supplement school meals and address summer hunger, but those programs only reach about 27% of the kids that need them³. Furthermore, food insecurity is on the rise again in Maine with the end of the SNAP Emergency Allotments and rising food costs, and households are struggling to make ends meet.

Throughout the pandemic and continuing today, Preble Street's Food Security Hub has been filling the gap for households experiencing food insecurity in southern Maine with healthy, nutritious, and mostly local food. Food is available in bulk for pickup or delivery, as well as delicious and nutritious ready-made meals distributed to organizations around the region. This bill would provide a one-time investment to complete the build-out of Preble Street's Food Security Hub, allowing them to expand the reach of this incredible program statewide. We enthusiastically support this proposed investment as it is critical to address the immediate, urgent need to feed Maine people now and in the future.

¹ <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2020/child/maine>

² <https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/13/health/healthy-school-food-nutrition-wellness/index.html>

³ <https://frac.org/research/resource-library/hunger-doesnt-take-a-vacation-summer-nutrition-status-report-2022>



We urge the committee to support LD 1612 to expand the reach and impact of Preble Street's Food Security Hub. Thank you for your time and consideration. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

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