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Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry,

My name is Taylor Cray and I am the Advocacy Supervisor at Preble Street. I am writing today in support of LD 2093, An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food.

As many of you know, Preble Street works to assist folks experiencing homelessness, housing insecurity, and food insecurity. A large and ever-growing element of our work relates to ensuring that individuals across Maine have access to nutritious food options. I'm sure you all remember our advocacy around the expansion of the Preble Street Food Security Hub during the first session of the 131st. We are deeply grateful to you all for supporting us in that work. The Food Security Hub provides hot, prepared meals to individuals living outside and in shelters while also serving as a location for caseworkers and social service providers to access nutritious food for their clients. The Preble Street Food Security Hub is already increasing food security in Maine, allowing our Food Programs team to make approximately 2,000 each day in the current space. Once the Food Security Hub is complete, we will be able to create up to 10,000 meals per day.

Even as we work to ramp up our efforts, the continued food needs that we see in Southern Maine are indicative of a statewide need for increased access to healthy and nutritious food for all Mainers. This bill plays a critical role in doing just that. For folks with lower incomes, particularly those with several mouths to feed, healthy food can often feel like a luxury. Nutrition incentive programs help to change that, making healthy food far more accessible and affordable. These programs also allow for more autonomy and personal choice in food purchasing. Oftentimes when individuals and families are accessing food through a food pantry or soup kitchen, their ability to make choices about the food they are eating is limited by what food items are available to them. Nutrition incentive programs increase access to a larger array of fresh produce, while also offering the opportunity to make decisions about which produce, and how much, will be purchased.

Nutrition incentive programs encourage individuals with lower incomes to spend their money locally, purchasing produce from small farms and local vendors. This increases the amount of money circulating within a local economy, while also fostering the creation of relationships between community members. The social impact of these interactions, particularly in the many rural areas of Maine, is arguably even more important than the economic impact. For many folks, knowing their neighbors provides a safety net and sense of belonging that is otherwise difficult to come by. The increased funding in LD 2093 allows for the continuation and potential growth of such interactions.

On behalf of Preble Street and our ongoing food security work, I ask that you please vote in favor of LD 2093.

Thank you.



United Way
of Southern Maine



