



**Testimony of Anna Korsen, Full Plates Full Potential
In Support of LD 2093**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. My name is Anna Korsen, Policy and Program 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 and that strengthening SNAP by investing in nutrition incentive programs like Maine Harvest Bucks is a critical step in the work to ensure food security for Maine kids.

Today, I'm submitting testimony in support of LD 2093 "An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food". We would like to thank Senator Ingwersen for introducing this bill that would be a win-win for Maine households and Maine agriculture. The investment proposed in this bill will go a long way to improve health and address food insecurity across our state by providing SNAP shoppers with resources to purchase more fresh local products, generating economic activity within the local food economy, and bringing additional federal SNAP dollars into 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.

Full Plates and our partners believe that all Mainers, despite their economic status, deserve high quality nutritious food. LD 2093 will increase Maine kids' access to healthy food when they are not in school, help Maine households with low income stretch their limited grocery budgets, and support Maine

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>



growers and producers. The investment proposed in this bill will not only generate economic activity that will directly benefit Maine farms, but will also bring additional federal dollars into our state. According to the Maine Federation of Farmers Markets, every \$1 of state support for Maine Harvest Bucks results in \$3 from the federal government⁴. This type of investment will pay dividends and improve the health of Maine's kids by increasing access to healthy, local food.

On a personal note, as a former SNAP recipient I took advantage of Maine Harvest Buckets at my local farmers market. It meant that I could purchase nutritious local foods to feed to myself and my son, establishing healthy eating habits for my child at a young age, all while supporting the wonderful growers and producers that provided our food.

We urge the committee to support LD 2093 to get more nutritious local food into households across Maine, a win-win for Maine kids and Maine's local food economy. Thank you for your time and consideration. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

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⁴ <https://mainefarmersmarkets.org/help-secure-state-funding-for-maine-harvest-bucks-ld-2093/>