



**Testimony of Shelley Megquier, Policy and Research Director, Maine Farmland Trust, to the
131st Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
January 22, 2024**

Good afternoon Senator Ingwerson, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. My name is Shelley Megquier and I am testifying today on behalf of Maine Farmland Trust (MFT) in support of LD 2093, *An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food*.

MFT is a member-powered statewide organization that works to protect farmland, support farmers, and advance the future of farming. Since our founding in 1999, MFT has helped to permanently protect more than 340 farms and keep over 60,000 acres of farmland in farming. Our Farm Network includes over 500 farms and in 2023, MFT supported 58 farm businesses with workshops, technical assistance, and grants – delivering over 612 hours of technical assistance and \$197,000 in business and seed grants to help businesses grow their profitability. Our main program areas are Farmland Protection, Farmland Access, Stewardship, Farm Business Planning, PFAS Support, Climate Resilience, and Policy and Research.

Nutrition incentive programs in Maine, such as the Maine Harvest Bucks and Farm Fresh Rewards programs, play a crucial role in our local food and farming system because they strengthen access to local foods for community members with limited food budgets, while also contributing to the viability of local farms and food businesses by helping them gain new customers and build sales. MFT first launched the Farm Fresh Rewards nutrition incentive program in 2016 and collaborated extensively over the years with partner organizations operating the Maine Harvest Bucks program to support the growth and reach of these programs across the state. We were thrilled to partner with Good Shepherd Food Bank to transition the Farm Fresh Rewards program to Good Shepherd in 2022. These programs empower more Maine community members to support the success of Maine farms and align with strategies contained within *Maine's Roadmap to End Hunger by 2030* to improve nutrition security by supporting and sustaining a diverse and robust local food system.¹

MFT supports LD 2093 because it provides increased and ongoing state funding for Maine nutrition incentive programs, setting them up to expand into more parts of the state and leverage more federal dollars directly in support of Maine's farms and local food economy.

We hope that you will support this bill and help strengthen food security in the state while simultaneously supporting Maine's food and farming businesses.

¹ *Everyone at the Table: Maine's Roadmap to End Hunger by 2030*, Commissioned by Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Goal B, Strategy 4, p. 32 (2022), available at: www.maine.gov/dacf/about/commissioners/endlunger/index.shtml#roadmap