

Testimony from Tobin Williamson of the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition regarding:  
**LD 2093: An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents  
Access Locally Produced Food**

Sponsored By: Senator Ingwersen of York County  
Public Hearing: January 22, 2024 at 11:00am

Dear Members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry:

My name is Tobin Williamson and I am the Manager of Advocacy & Policy with the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC), a network of around 100 member organizations working to enhance the lives of Maine's immigrant communities across the state. MIRC works to advance systemic changes in Maine through collaborative advocacy to ensure that voices and perspectives of the state's large, diverse, and growing immigrant communities are heard at the State House in Augusta, in the Halls of Congress in D.C., and in municipalities throughout Maine.

This bill from Senator Ingwersen "provides incentives to federal food and nutrition assistance program participants for the purchase of locally grown fruits and vegetables." We know members of Maine's immigrant communities utilize the "Maine Harvest Bucks" and "Farm Fresh Reward" to access local food from farmer's markets and food co-ops. According to information from the Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets, more than 15,000 Mainers in need (both immigrants and non-immigrants alike) throughout the state (in all sixteen counties!) access these programs each year, putting hundreds of thousands of dollars into their local economies.

An added benefit of this legislation is that it uses matching federal funds to make this investment go even further; for every \$1 the state invests, it gets around \$3 back from a combination of a matching U.S. Department of Agriculture grant and from SNAP. That's just good business. As Maine works towards its goal of [Ending Hunger by 2030](#), finding matching funds for people to use to buy healthy food could go a long way.

Moreover, this bill would benefit Maine residents who receive food and nutrition assistance by giving them additional options to purchase local produce, and it would also benefit hundreds of local Maine farmers and food providers by expanding their potential customer base. In our view, this is a win-win situation. We strongly encourage you to pass LD 2093. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

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