

Testimony of the Cumberland County Food Security Council in Support of LD 2093 - An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food

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

The Cumberland County Food Security Council (CCFSC) supports LD 2093, an essential legislative initiative that addresses food insecurity and promotes resilient food systems in Maine. CCFSC is part of a diverse network of organizations which build nutrition security through local food. For Maine's agriculture and rural economies to thrive, we must encourage all Maine residents to participate in local food systems. LD 2093 does this by supporting the purchase of local foods through SNAP and WIC benefits. We firmly believe that LD 2093 aligns with our mission and values and we endorse the bill for several reasons.

1. **Supporting Local Farms:** LD 2093, if enacted, will direct federal SNAP dollars to local farms and economies, fostering our resilient food system. This strengthens the agricultural sector by supporting farm livelihoods and bolsters rural economies.
2. **Affordability of Healthy and Culturally Important Food:** An important aspect of food security is making nutritious and culturally important food options accessible for all Maine residents.
3. **Sustained State Funding:** Sustained state funding ensures that we continue to see the proven economic and food security benefits of this program in the future. This bill will align Maine with other states, such as Massachusetts and New Hampshire, which have successfully implemented similar initiatives.
4. **Positive Health Outcomes:** Access to fresh, locally produced food has a direct impact on overall wellbeing, and this bill acknowledges the connection between food security and public health.

The Cumberland County Food Security Council urges the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry to consider the great benefits that LD 2093 offers to our state. Supporting this bill prioritizes the wellbeing of Maine residents while also fostering a sustainable local food system that will have lasting positive impacts on the state's economy. The proposed ongoing funding of \$1.2 million per fiscal year is a critical step toward achieving nutrition security for Maine residents.