



## Testimony of Good Shepherd Food Bank in support of LD 727, Resolve, to Ensure the Health and Wellness of Older Residents of the State

March 17, 2021

To Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Amy Gallant and I am the Vice President of Public Policy & Research for Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine. We have a network of more than 500 partner agencies, supporting our mission to eliminate hunger in Maine by improving access to nutritious food for people in need, building strong community partnerships, and mobilizing the public in the fight to end hunger. Last year, through our network, we distributed 27 million meals across the entire state.

This resolve directs the Department of Health and Human Services to request the United States Department of Agriculture to waive the asset test for determining the eligibility for the federal supplemental nutrition assistance program of any household in which there is an individual who is 60 years of age or older. While Good Shepherd Food Bank supports this initiative, we also support eliminating the asset test for all Mainers.

Eliminating asset tests is beneficial for families and state governments. Families can save for unexpected events and build greater financial security, and state governments can reduce administrative costs by not having to verify assets. Asset tests are counter to the goal of SNAP to support recipients as they build their financial security. Having savings allows Mainers to plan for unexpected health care expenses, for a housing emergency, for a vehicle repair or for utilities in a cold snap.

States have significant oversight to set or eliminate asset tests through a policy known as broad-based categorical eligibility. Maine's current asset test is \$5,000 and more than one vehicle. This means that if a household is otherwise eligible for SNAP, they are ineligible if they have more than \$5,000 in the bank and more than one vehicle in the driveway. Thirty-four states and the District of Columbia have eliminated their SNAP asset test for most recipients. Maine is one of five states to have raised their asset test to \$5,000.

Eliminating the asset test does not eliminate the income eligibility. Mainers still have to make under \$23,828 for a family of one, \$32,227 for a family of two, \$40,626 for a family of three and \$49,025 for a family of four to be income-eligible for SNAP. Eliminating the asset test will allow SNAP recipients to continue working on becoming more financially secure and self-sufficient. Accumulating even a small amount of savings may reduce the length of time families need public assistance. It can certainly relieve some of the financial stress in the household. Asset tests force families to deplete savings and sell assets to qualify for assistance, sending the message that they should spend rather than save. This is the wrong message. Raising or eliminating asset tests promotes habitual savings and economic independence rather than dependence on immediate aid.

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Removing the asset test decreases time spent completing SNAP applications and can lead to faster assistance delivery. If eliminating the asset test results in a higher number of Mainers who are eligible for the program, SNAP benefits are paid by the federal government therefore there is little to no cost to the state.

Good Shepherd Food Bank supports this bill, and supports eliminating asset tests for all Mainers.

Thank you for your consideration,

Amy Gallant

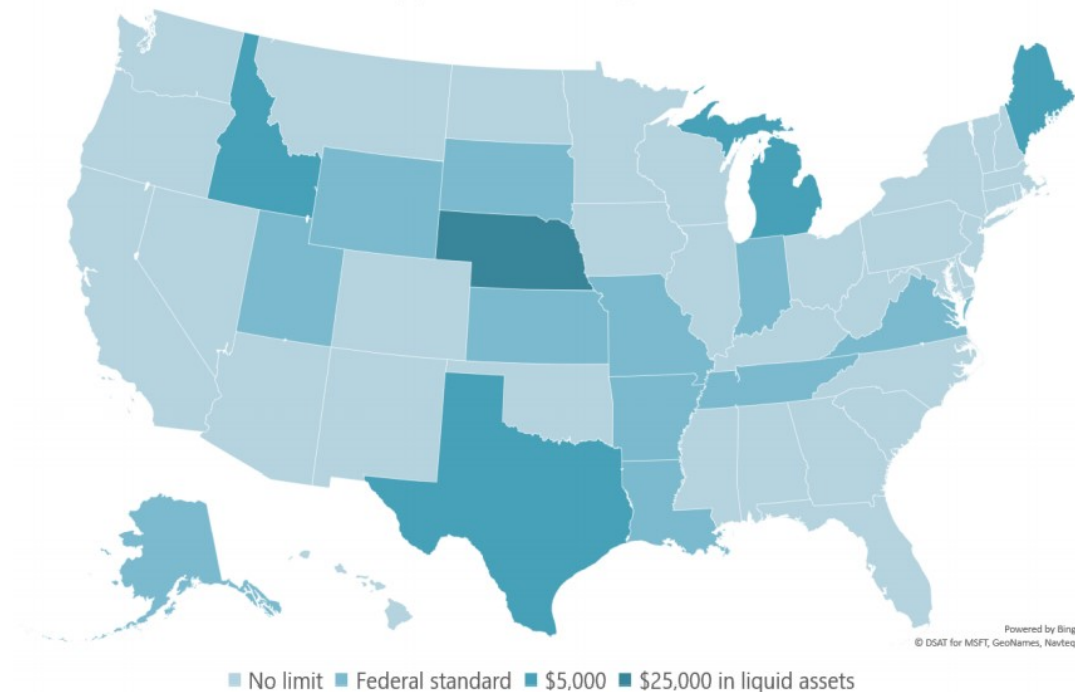
Good Shepherd Food Bank

Vice President of Public Policy & Research

Resources: [A Closer Look at Who Benefits from SNAP: State-by-State Fact Sheets | Center on Budget and Policy Priorities \(cbpp.org\)](#), [2018\\_eliminatingassetlimits.pdf \(clasp.org\)](#)

## SNAP Asset Limit

Applicants and Recipients



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