

Carolyn Silvius
Portland

Good morning Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer , and members of the committee of Health and human services. My name is Carolyn Silvius and I live in Portland. I am a member of Homeless Voices for Justice and a long-time advocate for the poor, homeless and hungry in Maine. I'm here to speak in favor of LD727, which would eliminate the asset test required to receive SNAP benefits.

The income threshold required to qualify for SNAP is very low. It is doubtful that anyone who meets this requirement will be able to save enough of their income to move them out of the poverty level. Therefore the asset test is simply another impediment to receiving benefits, and not necessary.

A few years ago, I lost my SNAP benefits for a short period. At that point, I had been frantically trying to save every penny I could toward the price of an inexpensive used car which, because of my disabilities, I desperately needed. Without my food stamps, in order to buy food to stay alive I had to use my savings. Everything I had managed to save in the previous year was gone in two months, and so was any hope of the car I needed.

Having a modest savings account is a reasonable practice. A few thousand dollars in reserve for unexpected or unplanned emergencies such as transportation, health care, or even housing costs is just good practice. A person should not have to completely impoverish himself in order to buy the food necessary to live. It makes no sense.

I urge you to preserve access to SNAP, a means of survival for Mainers. Restrictions such as asset tests and qualifying for unrelated programs should not be allowed to stop Maine citizens from accessing food benefits. Food is life and I want to live.