



Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
April 24, 2025

In support of:

LD 1605 An Act to Support Farmers and Food Banks Affected by Federal Cuts to Their Existing Contracts

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rev. Jon Olson, I am the pastor of the North Wayne Church, a volunteer at the Mt. Vernon Food Bank, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Maine Council of Churches where I serve on their Public Policy Committee. I am testifying in my capacity as a pastor and food bank volunteer, and on behalf of the Council **in support of LD 1605.**

The Mt. Vernon Food Bank feeds 85 families from the communities of Mt. Vernon, Fayette Vienna and Readfield. The **number of families needing food is growing.** The more than 400 local churches that belong to the Council's seven mainline Protestant member denominations are seeing the same growing need in their communities, too. It's disheartening to me, my congregation, my community, and to the Maine Council of Churches that there are so many Maine families that don't have enough money to purchase the food they need.

In the midst of this growing need, we are now seeing **reductions in The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)**, a federal program that provides emergency food for low-income people, as well as **reductions in the amount of USDA surplus foods.** We are also concerned with the **negative impact on Maine farmers whose federal grants are being reduced or canceled** and what it might do to food banks that rely on a supply of food from those farms.

One of the pillars of the Maine Council of Churches' Moral Agenda (a document that guides our faith-based advocacy work) is "Elimination of hunger and poverty, and enactment of policies benefiting the most vulnerable." **Because passage of LD 1605 will help efforts to eliminate hunger and will benefit the most vulnerable Mainers, the Council supports this bill.**

In our great state, where we are able to produce abundant and nutritious food, **no one should go hungry. The passage of this bill will help ensure no one does. We urge you to vote OUGHT TO PASS on LD 1605.**

Thank you for your attention.

*Episcopal Diocese of Maine, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA),
Religious Society of Friends, Unitarian Universalist Association, United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church*