



**Everyone at the Table:**

# **MAINE'S ROADMAP TO END HUNGER**

**> by 2030**

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## FROM THE COMMISSIONER

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This roadmap was born out of the 129th Legislature’s LD 1159, authored by then-Rep. Craig Hickman and signed by Governor Mills. It results from over two years of collaborative work by and contributions from hundreds of individuals from both inside and outside of State government.

Four generous philanthropic funders—the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation, the John T. Gorman Foundation, the Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation, and Hannaford Supermarkets—supported the research, the planning, and the dozens of community convenings that went into this document. And I want to offer my sincere thanks to the Legislature and the Governor for entrusting the Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry to facilitate the creation of this plan. While DACF is central to feeding Maine people—both through our support of agricultural producers and as part of the

web of providers meeting the needs of Mainers living with food insecurity—we know that ending hunger in Maine will truly require that everyone be at the table.

My biggest thanks go to the hundreds of Maine people who committed their time, talent, and personal and professional experiences to make this plan a reality. In three phases of work (interrupted by a global pandemic), upwards of 200 Maine people brought clear eyes and open minds to wrestle with the rampant and corrosive presence of hunger in our state. These people included legislators, nonprofit and business leaders, educators, policy experts, and concerned Maine residents. Importantly, it included Mainers with lived and living experience of hunger who bravely shared intimate portraits of hunger as it’s faced each day and who shined an invaluable light on the solutions that can end this ongoing yet preventable emergency.

In a very real sense, DACF has merely been the steward of this plan. It comes from and belongs to the people of Maine.

While the effort to create this plan was significant, it is just the first step in this process. The work that remains requires continued commitment, compassion, and courage. The Department looks forward to taking this journey with you.

Sincerely,

*Amanda E. Beal*

**AMANDA E. BEAL**  
Commissioner,  
Department of Agriculture,  
Conservation & Forestry



## THE VISION

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We envision a Maine free from hunger which we have defined as **no very low food security (hunger)** and **4% low food security**.<sup>1</sup>

Ending hunger is not something that one group does for the benefit of another. Ending hunger is our North Star, guiding a collective commitment to creating a state that offers all its people a stable foundation on which to build a good quality of life.

In hunger-free communities, everyone has access to the resources they need, and no one is forced to make the impossible trade-offs that result in food insecurity—

trade-offs like skipping meals to pay for housing, medicine, or heat, or staying in an unsafe relationship because leaving jeopardizes your ability to keep food on the table for your children.

Ending hunger interrupts generational cycles of harm and trauma and opens doors to opportunity and prosperity for the people, families, and communities of Maine.

**OUR THEORY OF CHANGE** > The Outcomes

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

# Everyone at the Table— Maine's Roadmap for Ending Hunger by 2030





### STRATEGIC GOALS:

- A** Build the infrastructure and capacity necessary within and outside state government to coordinate the implementation of Maine's Roadmap to End Hunger.
- B** Ensure consistent, easy access to healthy, culturally appropriate food.
- C** Promote, bolster, and ensure economic security and opportunity.
- D** Change the narrative of food insecurity to focus on collective responsibility and center the voices of impacted people.
- E** Close the equity gap in household food security by addressing underlying structural inequities in all Ending Hunger 2030 goals.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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"Hunger is not caused by a scarcity of food but a scarcity of democracy."

– FRANCES MOORE LAPPÉ

Maine's Roadmap to End Hunger by 2030 aims at the root causes of hunger and food insecurity in our state. This approach was indicated in the authorizing legislation, 2019's "Resolve to End Hunger in Maine by 2030" (LD 1159), and explicitly endorsed in the unanimously accepted "Ending Hunger in Maine by 2030" Report to the 129th Legislature (a.k.a., the Interim Report).

To understand this roadmap and its recommendations, it's critical to grasp a seeming paradox: food security in Maine has little to do with food. Or, more accurately, the causes of food insecurity have little to do with a scarcity of food. Food insecurity is most often a function of economic insecurity; hunger is a symptom of poverty.

"Everyone at the Table" unequivocally affirms the role that food and food distribution play in responding to hunger today. Community-level solutions like compassionate, user-centered charitable food initiatives; opportunities that empower people to grow their own food; and programs that make local foods accessible to food-insecure people are enriching the lives of Maine people in untold ways. Moreover, as the pandemic has underscored, a healthy, localized food system is essential to our community resilience. That is why the plan

recommends investing in Maine's food infrastructure and food businesses as ways to simultaneously safeguard our food supply as we grow jobs in Maine's important natural resource sectors.

That said, the aim of this plan ultimately is to end hunger, and to do so by foregrounding root-cause strategies that prevent the problem from happening in the first place. That's why the plan's overwhelming focus is on income and resources—and the forces that hold income and resource inequality in place. For those who pick up this plan and ask, "What do affordable childcare or the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan have to do with hunger?" The answer is, "Everything." When we create a robust and equitable economy for those who can work, and a user-centered and adequate social safety net for everyone, we will end hunger.

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This roadmap leverages expertise from across State government. Contributing Departments include Education; Economic and Community Development; Health and Human Service; Transportation; Labor; the Office of the State Economist; and The Governor's Office on Policy, Innovation, and the Future. These policy makers were joined by a broad swath of legislators, nonprofit and business leaders, educators, policy experts, and concerned Maine residents. Importantly, contributors included Mainers with lived and living experience of hunger. This Maine-based expertise was deepened by research into best practices and success stories from anti-hunger work in other communities and around the globe.

The result is a roadmap rooted in:

- evidence-based solutions to hunger,
- the unique nature of the problem in Maine, and
- the priorities of Maine people.



It's clear why Maine's Legislature and Governor were moved in 2019 to make ending hunger the State's objective.

First, hunger and food insecurity are a lethal if often invisible epidemic. When most recently measured, one-in-eight Maine people and one-in-five Maine children were hungry or at risk for hunger. That is a breathtaking level of suffering: it means that each day thousands of children show up to school too hungry to learn, thousands of workers are too economically insecure to thrive, and thousands of Maine people are contending with entirely preventable ill health. Were the State to continue to choose not to tackle hunger, we would be quite literally hobbling every community in our state.

Second, hunger's human toll has an economic impact Maine can ill afford. Each year we incur \$709 million in hunger-related costs from lost productivity, increased need for special education services, preventable health conditions, and more. That's on top of

the \$370 million spent feeding people [see pp. 25-27]. If we allocated resources to end hunger rather than to treat it, we estimate we would need far less than the \$1 billion currently being spent—directly and indirectly—and we'd create more flourishing and joyful communities in the process.

Third, the problem of hunger is solvable. It is true that poverty and hunger are persistent, multifaceted challenges. History and recent events, however, suggest that we know what works to end them. In 2020, for example, we endured the most significant economic contraction since the Great Depression. Nevertheless, after briefly trending upward, poverty and food insecurity fell measurably against this catastrophic backdrop. They fell because government chose to do simple things—like prepaying the Child Tax Credit and expanding SNAP benefits—that kept millions

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY > The Proposed Work Ahead

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of Americans and thousands of Mainers from going without. If we can do that in times of economic calamity, imagine what we can do in times of relative prosperity—should we choose to.

Maine’s Roadmap to End Hunger by 2030 proposes two overlapping strategy areas—strengthening our response to food insecurity today and preventing food insecurity tomorrow—along with three cross-cutting goals that define priorities for how that work gets done:

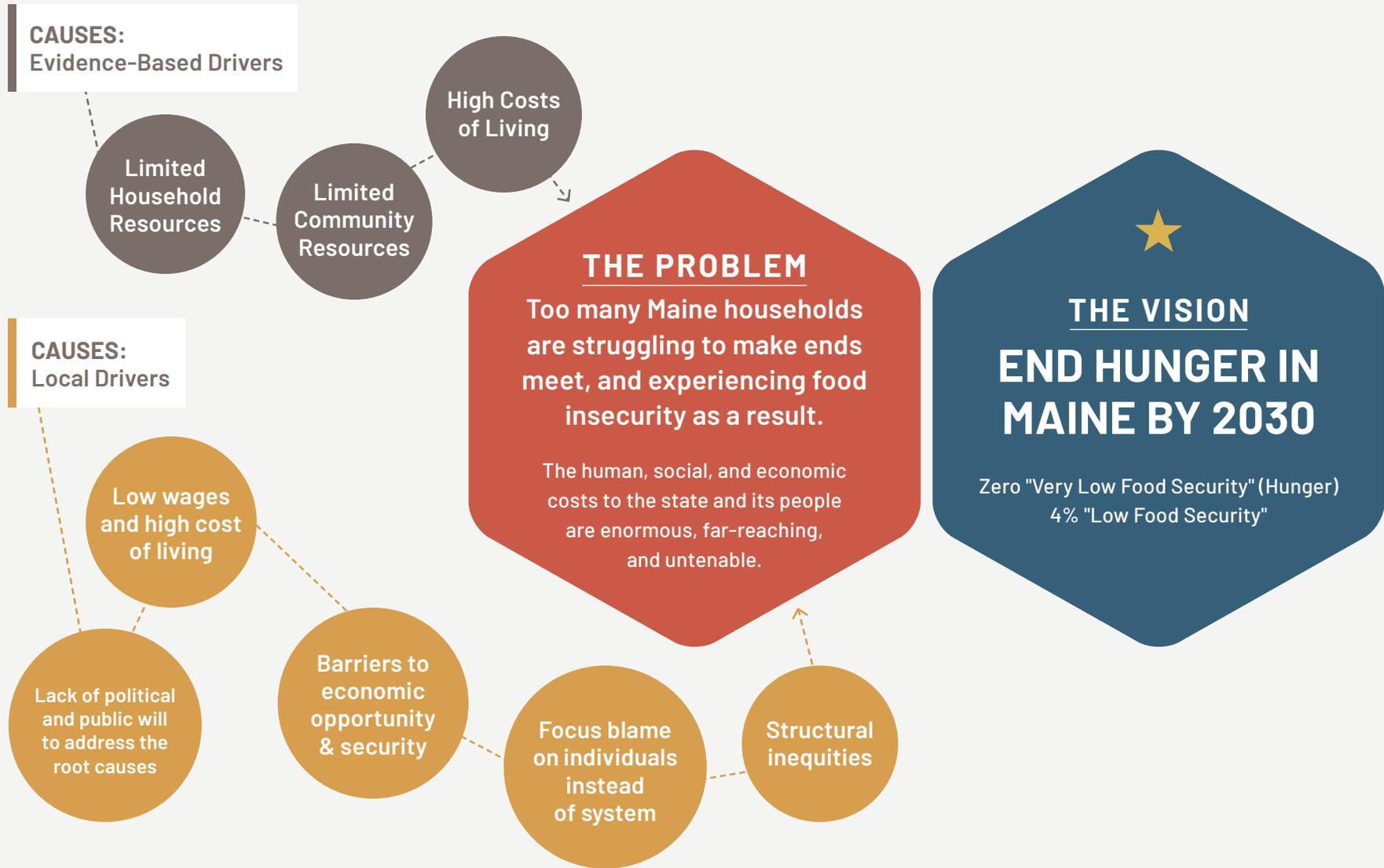
- **build** the capacity needed to implement the plan,
- **reframe** our narratives around hunger and poverty to emphasize that structural forces not individualized behaviors, create most poverty , and
- **prioritize** equity every step of the way.

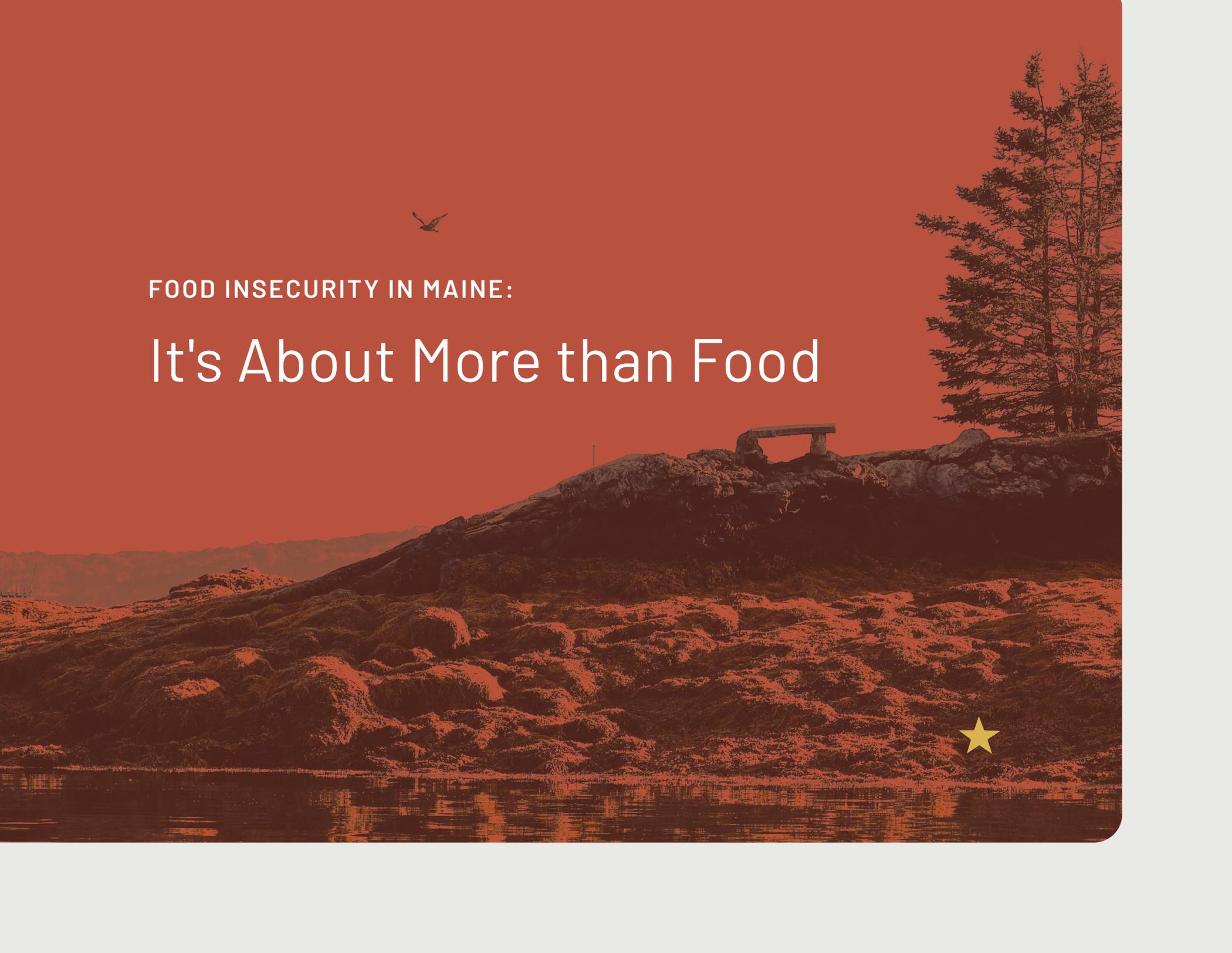
To strengthen our response today, we must improve the accessibility and impact of public and nonprofit food assistance; burdensome systems contribute to a vicious cycle of poverty. To prevent food insecurity tomorrow, we must address the economic and cultural conditions which hold the problem in place.

Some of this work is underway. The Department of Education has implemented free meals for every Maine student, the Department of Health and Human Services is exploring options for making accessing programs more integrated and user-centered, and the Department of Transportation is launching pilots that provide reliable transportation to low-income job seekers and workers—to name just a few examples.

That said, much work remains—and everyone has a role to play in implementing this plan. This bold vision requires ongoing collaboration, investment, and innovation across sectors and across experience.

The willingness of plan contributors and many other Mainers to commit to the goals articulated within signals that the opportunity to truly End Hunger by 2030 is very well within reach.





FOOD INSECURITY IN MAINE:

# It's About More than Food

## FOOD INSECURITY IN MAINE

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### Food Insecurity Defined:

Lack of consistent access to enough food for an active and healthy life for all household members due to the inadequate economic resources at the household level. (USDA)



**Food insecurity is a crisis in Maine, impacting 11.4% of households in the state, or over 153,000 people a year<sup>2</sup>.**

That's roughly equivalent to the combined populations of Maine's four largest cities. The problem is even more pervasive among Maine's children, of whom almost one in five, or 18.1%, are impacted<sup>3</sup>. These numbers represent people living, working, growing up, and growing old in every community in Maine.

Although the problem is widespread, dramatic disparities exist. Food insecurity rates are two to four times higher in certain communities or among certain demographics, including African immigrants (food insecurity: 51.6%), single-parent households (42%), people with a disability that prevents them from working (39%)<sup>4</sup>, and all People of Color (28.3%)<sup>5</sup>. There are also significant geographic and occupational differences. (For more, see pp. 18-21)

## FOOD INSECURITY IN MAINE

### Food Insecurity in Maine is More Common, More Severe, and Happens at Higher Incomes Than Elsewhere in New England and the U.S.

Maine has been an outlier, nationally and regionally, with above average rates of household food insecurity every year since 2005 (USDA, Feeding America). Even as the national food insecurity rate recovered following the 2008 recession, the problem in Maine grew worse, reaching a high of 16.4% for 2014–2016. Since at least 2005, Maine has had the highest rate of food insecurity in New England, a region otherwise notable for its low food insecurity.

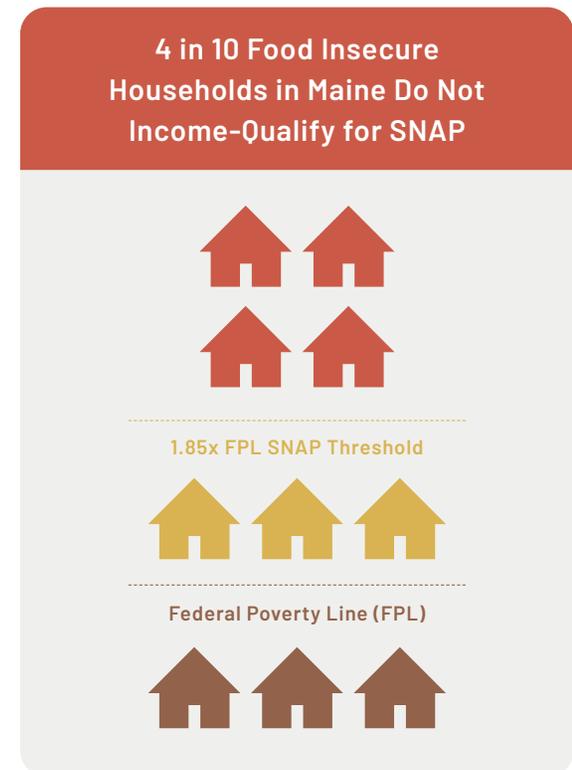
This outlier status reflects the unique nature and scale of economic hardship in our state where food insecurity is more severe and happens at higher income levels than it does regionally and nationally. Maine had the second highest rate of very low food security (the most severe level of the problem) in the

nation in 2017–2019, representing over half of all food insecure households – a share far above the national average (USDA).

Among food-insecure Mainers, 43% have incomes higher than the eligibility threshold for SNAP and WIC, the most effective anti-hunger programs available.<sup>6</sup> The phenomenon of struggling with food insecurity yet being ineligible for anti-hunger programs afflicts far fewer families nationally, indicating that the way poverty is defined and calculated is particularly ill-suited for capturing the economic realities and living costs in Maine.

Struggling Maine households without safety net access are severely disadvantaged by our state's unique economic challenges marked by low wages and a high cost of living. Meanwhile, those who do income-qualify for safety net programs are often derailed by "benefits cliffs"—the distressingly common phenomenon of modest income

gains triggering significantly larger benefits losses (e.g., when an additional \$100 of monthly income precipitates the loss of \$600 of monthly benefits). This dynamic creates barriers to financial stability and keeps food security out of reach.

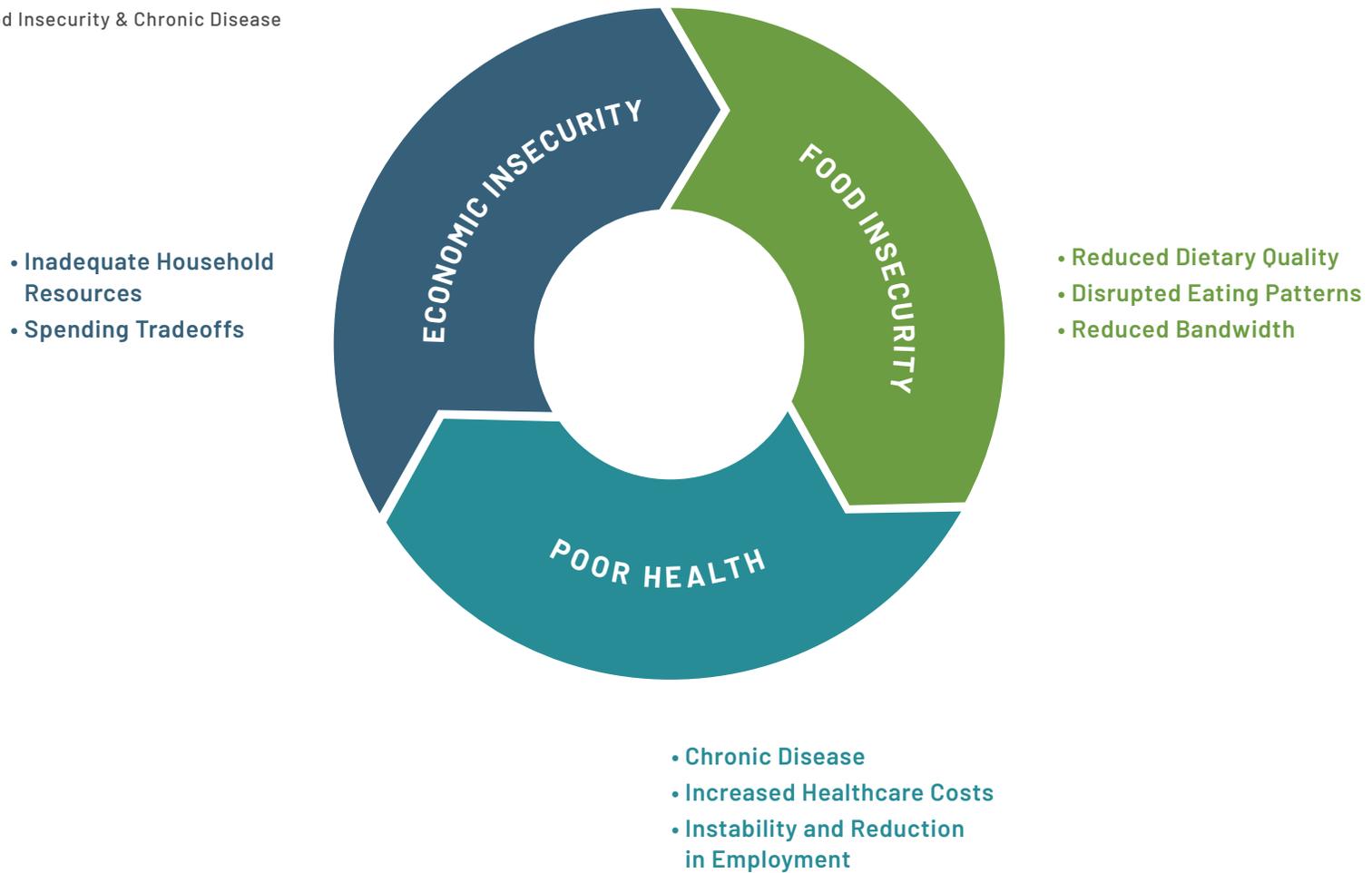


## FOOD INSECURITY IN MAINE

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### The Cycle of Economic Insecurity, Food Insecurity & Poor Health

Adapted from Feeding America's Conceptual Framework:  
Cycle of Food Insecurity & Chronic Disease





THE EQUITY GAP

# in Household Food Security in Maine



## THE EQUITY GAP IN HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY IN MAINE

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Food insecurity is a key indicator of both economic well-being and equity in the state.

It shows us how many households are struggling to make ends meet and experiencing inconsistent access to food as a result, and which communities are impacted most severely and most disproportionately.

Food Insecurity Rate by Race & Ethnicity in Maine  
2015 - 2017

51.60% African Immigrants

40.20% All Black Households

29.50% American Indian

28.30% All People of Color

27.70% Black Non-Immigrant

23.10% Hispanic

16.40% Asian

14.70% White non-Hispanic

## THE EQUITY GAP IN HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY IN MAINE

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**Food insecurity measures show us how many households are struggling to make ends meet and which communities are impacted most severely and most disproportionately.**

Addressing disparities is a priority embedded in the legislative roots of Maine's Roadmap to End Hunger by 2030. LD 1159 called explicitly for a plan which would identify and close equity gaps on the road towards eradicating hunger in the state. That work began with the Ending Hunger in Maine by 2030, Report as requested by the 129<sup>th</sup> Legislature (the Interim Report). The Interim Report disaggregated data and found that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in Maine are experiencing food insecurity at a rate two to nearly four times higher than the state average<sup>7</sup>.

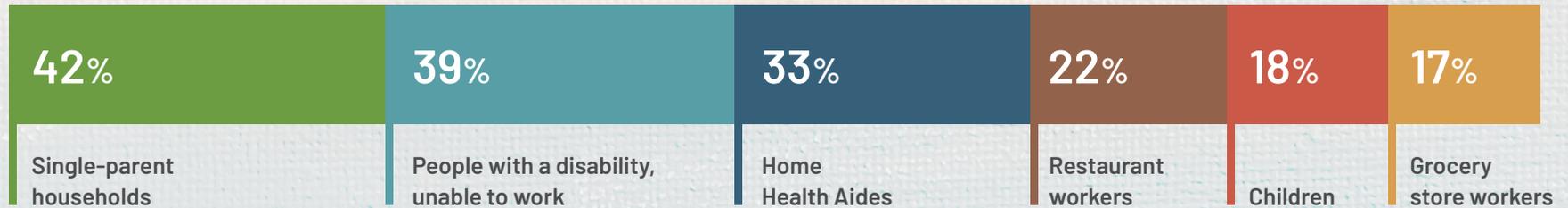
The connection between household characteristics and increased risk and experience of food insecurity reflect underlying inequalities, like structural racism, which cause economic and social

disadvantages. Racial disparities in Maine permeate the metrics, which research has identified as the key drivers of food insecurity: economic security, education, health access, home ownership, and involvement with the criminal justice system.<sup>8</sup>

Immigrants in Maine face particular barriers to employment and economic security, like having unrecognized foreign professional credentials, ineligibility for public benefits, and lack of culturally-responsive services, which can be exacerbated by racial discrimination for People of Color.

## THE EQUITY GAP IN HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY IN MAINE

### Groups Impacted Severely by Food Insecurity in Maine



Single-parent households are also among the groups experiencing the highest rates of food insecurity in the state at an estimated 42%.

Food insecurity is predictably high among low-wage workers, affecting, for instance, one in three home health aides and around one in five grocery store and restaurant workers. For Maine people whose disability prevents them from working, 39% are food insecure; a rate more than three times higher than the state average.<sup>9</sup>

## THE EQUITY GAP IN HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY IN MAINE

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**Recent trends in disparities are heading in the wrong direction. The 2021 USDA Household Food Insecurity Report delivered good news overall but bad news in terms of equity.**

As a result of expanded government aid programs, overall household food insecurity rates in 2020 declined despite the economic upheaval caused by the pandemic. At the same time, higher-than-average food insecurity rates among Black households and households with children persisted and increased. Meanwhile, new data from the U.S. Census Bureau revealed that nationally, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender adults are nearly twice as likely to live in food-insecure households.<sup>10</sup>

Evidence of worsening disparities amidst other progress highlights the need for a deep commitment to addressing equity gaps as we drive toward zero hunger. Many of the disparities we see can be traced directly to historic harm done to communities. That is why hunger rates are so much higher,

for example, among Black and Indigenous Mainers. Everyone at The Table has been developed with prioritizing equity in mind. We have evaluated our goals, strategies, and initiatives, using an equity framework<sup>11</sup>, and we recommend ongoing evaluation of progress towards reducing disparities. We have also identified where capacity building and investment are needed to monitor and evaluate equity in outcomes.



" My mother was poor. My grandmother was poor. I didn't do too much better - not because I didn't have high hopes and big dreams, but just because of what I was able to access. Hopefully, my kids are going to be okay "

– EH2033 CONTRIBUTOR, Impacted Community Recommendations  
& Review on the Interim Report for Ending Hunger by 2030 –



A CALL TO ACTION

# The Case for Ending Hunger



## THE CASE FOR ENDING HUNGER

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When we asked EH2030 contributors about what causes or exacerbates food insecurity in our communities, we heard the same challenges facing our economy generally: the decline of Maine’s manufacturing and other sectors; a lack of affordable housing, especially near available jobs; and the need for higher wages.

In many ways, the State’s vision for ending hunger and its vision for creating a thriving economy with a place for everyone are deeply related. We cannot end hunger without growing wages. And we cannot grow the workforce without addressing the childcare, housing, and transportation issues that create the same barriers to opportunity that cause food insecurity.

**The status quo of food insecurity in Maine comes at great cost to the state, socially and economically. Food insecurity is traumatic and harmful. It damages human potential, depriving people of not only food, but health and well-being, opportunity, and security.**

For many Mainers, the effects are generational and take an especially hard and long-lasting toll when experienced as a child. Among many associated serious impacts are chronic physical health issues, behavioral and psychological health issues, delayed development in young children, and barriers to economic stability, employment, and educational achievement—all contributing to the vicious cycle of poverty<sup>12</sup>.

As noted earlier, we currently spend \$305 million per year in public funds on supplemental nutrition programs like SNAP, while the charitable food sector spends another \$64 million on food. According to Feeding America, that \$369 million in annual expenditures falls short by about \$105 million in terms of meeting the actual resource needs of Maine families.

## THE CASE FOR ENDING HUNGER

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**Total Annual Food Budget  
Gap for Food Insecure  
Households in Maine**

**\$105M**

When we don't find a way to fill that \$105 million shortfall, we end up incurring an additional \$709 million in negative impacts from things like lost productivity, increased need for special education services, preventable health conditions, and more. Totaling the direct expenses (\$369 million) and the negative economic toll (\$709 million), **the status quo of not ending hunger is costing us about \$1.08 billion per year, whereas a solution might cost as little as \$474 million.**

**\$1 BILLION**  
**Estimated Annual  
Economic Cost of Food  
Insecurity in Maine**

GOALS & STRATEGIES

# Maine's Roadmap to End Hunger by 2030





## Build the Infrastructure & Capacity Necessary Within and Outside State Government to Coordinate Implementation of the Maine's Plan to End Hunger

Eliminating hunger by 2030 in Maine requires all sectors of the state and many sectors of state government to work in concert.

Systems, safeguards, and supports are needed to guide and coordinate this cross-cutting work. Through clear reporting structures and data collection systems, Maine can measure its progress and ensure that critical targets are being met.

### Strategy 1:

Coordinate EH2030 implementation from the Governor's Office to support the cross-cutting and collaborative efforts necessary to end hunger.

#### *Proposed Initiatives and Investments:*

- Fund and staff efforts to implement the EH2030 plan.
- Strengthen relationships and align action across governmental, educational, social service, philanthropic and private sectors.
- Track and facilitate coordination among allied departmental and legislative initiatives.

### Strategy 2:

Encourage, Stimulate, and Support Local and Regional Collaborative Efforts and Public-Private Partnerships to Meet and Address Meal Gap and Systemic Causes of Hunger

#### *Proposed Initiatives and Investments:*

- Identify, promote, and support the scaling of effective local models and models successfully implemented elsewhere.
- Leverage DACF's Ending Hunger in Maine VISTA project to spur and coordinate the regional implementation of Ending Hunger by 2030 initiatives and strategies.
- Cooperate and coordinate with the philanthropic sector to align funding opportunities with plan objectives.

## MAINE'S ROADMAP TO END HUNGER BY 2030 > GOAL A

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### Strategy 3:

**Maintain an Advisory Committee to Guide Implementation of the State Roadmap to End Hunger, including Inclusion of Those with Lived Experience**

*Proposed Initiatives and Investments:*

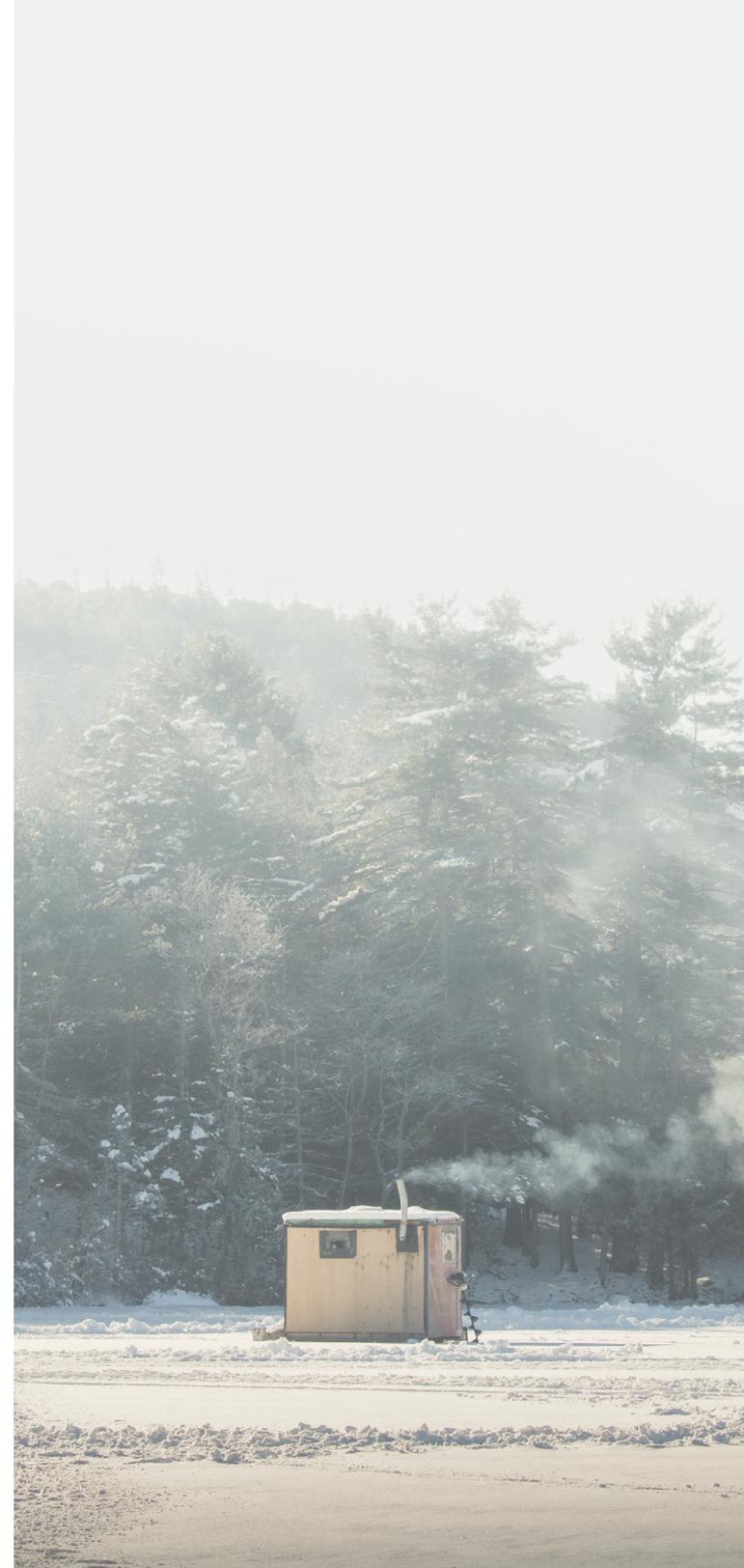
- Issue an annual report on the state of hunger in Maine, progress made toward ending hunger, and progress made on implementing the roadmap.

### Strategy 4:

**Develop and Maintain Data Systems for Tracking Progress, Measuring Disparities, and Continuous Learning and Improvement**

*Proposed Initiatives and Investments:*

- Establish the capacity to disaggregate data on key outcomes for people and outcomes for systems to track and report on disparities at the county and municipal levels.
- Develop specific output, outcome, and impact indicators for each plan strategy.



## **B** Ensure Consistent, Easy, & Equitable Access to Healthy & Culturally Appropriate Food

**In order to end hunger in Maine, the first step is to ensure that all Maine residents have easy, consistent access to healthy and culturally appropriate food today.**

Federal nutrition programs like SNAP, WIC, GusNIP, and the National School Lunch Program are powerful, proven tools for addressing food insecurity. The challenge and opportunity for Maine is to maximize the utilization and impact of those federal dollars, especially in light of recent program expansions.

The charitable food system, meanwhile, does a heroic job keeping food flowing on-the-ground, directly to those who need it. Food banks, food pantries, school backpack programs, mutual-aid community food distributions—all overwhelmingly staffed by

volunteers—have met the unprecedented demand of our moment with creativity, ingenuity, and caring. We can and should continue to augment these volunteer supported efforts. At the same time, we recognize that the charitable food system alone cannot end hunger today, and it takes more than just food to end hunger tomorrow. A strong and active role by State and federal governments as a partner in this effort is essential to successfully ending hunger in Maine by 2030.

For those reasons, this goal is focused on investments which improve the accessibility and impact of food assistance programs through cross-sector coordination and support, and by strengthening our regional food system and supply chains. Given that specific communities, for historical reasons, are disproportionately impacted by hunger and food insecurity, our solutions must

address and reduce those inequities as we ensure food security for all Maine residents. The communities include all People of Color, particularly Black Mainers, new Americans and historically present Black Americans; Indigenous and tribal communities; individuals under the care of the State (e.g., individuals in the correctional system, disabilities system, and foster care system), Female-headed households; LGBTQ residents, and those living in rural communities. As such, the more collectively supported, user-centered, accessible, and equitable our food assistance programs are, the more they contribute to pathways to economic and food security for all. Meanwhile, building the resilience of our regional food system safeguards nutrition security for Maine's future while contributing to our state's climate action and economic development goals.

**Strategy 1:**

**Maximize Federal Nutrition Programs & Child Nutrition Programs and Policies**

*Proposed Initiatives and Investments:*

- Use Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) for SNAP to raise the gross income threshold to 200% of the federal poverty level and remove asset limits.
- Seek to maximize participation in federal nutrition programs including school nutrition programs and nutrition incentive programs, taking special care to foster initiatives and partnerships that address barriers to access and cultural relevance for disproportionately impacted communities.
- Advocate for nutrition program eligibility criteria and definitions of poverty that would encompass all Maine residents who are food insecure.

What does **THE PLAN IN ACTION** mean?

Everyone at the Table sets a course for a hunger-free Maine. There will be many pathways toward our destination, and this roadmap isn't intended to provide detail on every possible initiative or investment that will move us closer. At the same time, we recognize that recommendations that are too general may be harder to envision or act on. When you see this symbol  under the banner "The Plan in Action," we provide a concrete example of the kind of aligned initiative that is already underway in Maine or has proven successful elsewhere.



**THE PLAN IN ACTION:**

**Scaling Benefits to Match Economic Realities is Critical**

On October 1, 2021, Maine residents who qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program got a boost in their buying power. The US Department of Agriculture announced a 21% permanent increase to the program after re-evaluating the cost of healthy meals. It took into account convenience foods, like pre-cooked canned beans and pre-cut salads, chopped frozen vegetables, and pre-cut salads have been added to help increase nutrition values for each meal.

[READ MORE >](#)



**THE PLAN IN ACTION: Universal School Meals Lowers Barriers to Child Nutrition**

The federal government made breakfast and lunch free for all students during the coronavirus pandemic, and Maine will continue to offer free meals at least through 2023. The effort has highlighted the importance of providing meals to all students, not just those who meet income eligibility requirements. Making school meals free for all students dramatically improves access to healthy food for thousands of Maine children.

According to the Maine Department of Education, about 38%, or 65,000 students, are currently eligible for free or reduced-price meals. [READ MORE >](#)

**Strategy 2:**

**Expand the Impact and Capacity of Food Assistance Programs through Cross-Sector Investment, Collaboration, & Coordination**

*Proposed Initiatives and Investments:*

- Continue to invest in charitable and community-based food assistance programs as a necessary complement to the inconsistent nature of philanthropic funding and to bolster capacity among providers to ensure the system can meet the need.

- Improve coordination and collaboration across charitable food programs, public programs addressing food and economic insecurity, and the health system.
- Invest in innovative public-private partnerships and strengthen existing programs which increase low-income access to local, healthy food.

## MAINE'S ROADMAP TO END HUNGER BY 2030 > GOAL B

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### Strategy 3:

#### **Transform Food Assistance Programs with an Increasingly User-Centered, Culturally Responsive, Low Barrier, and Equity-Driven Approach**

##### *Proposed Initiatives and Investments:*

- Include people using food assistance programs or impacted by hunger in program design and delivery to ensure programs benefit from the expertise of lived experience and meet the needs of the community.
- Encourage and support the capacity of food assistance providers to adopt best practice standards that maximize choice, quality, and dignity.
- Promote and invest in community-based initiatives in a variety of models (e.g., school-based pantries, mutual aid groups, etc.) to ensure barrier-free, culturally responsive access to food.
- Build, expand, and strengthen relationships with organizations and community groups embedded in impacted communities. Emphasize relationships that will improve access for disproportionately impacted communities who are underserved by charitable and public food assistance programs.
- Expand mobile and home delivery access models in communities to serve those that are homebound or have transportation barriers.
- Integrate complementary services and supports (e.g. connections to public assistance programs, food and otherwise) with food assistance programs, and co-locate food access points at locations providing other community and public services.
- Expand use of technology to enable solutions such as ordering ahead, scheduling appointments, and other applications that allow for more efficient private food access.
- Develop better data sharing models to measure the extent to which programs are meeting the needs of all populations.



**THE PLAN IN ACTION: Grassroots Mutual Aid Models**  
**Ensure Stigma-Free and Culturally Appropriate Food**

When the COVID-19 pandemic first arrived, organizers with Presenté! Maine were quick to recognize the crisis' impending impacts on Latinx communities, People of Color, and low income people across the state. Just days after the first COVID case was recorded in the state, Presenté launched the Food Brigade, a mutual-aid project that delivers weekly food rations to people in need. Since its first week of operation, during which rations were distributed to 50 people, the Food Brigade's capacity has grown massively: Every week, the project now delivers 15,000 pounds of food to 2,200 people in Portland, Lewiston and surrounding towns. [READ MORE >](#)

**THE PLAN IN ACTION: Sharing Power by Sharing Resources**

Recognizing that community-led and community-based organizations are often better situated to provide aid (including culturally appropriate food), the Good Shepherd Food Bank launched its Community Redistribution Fund. GSFB regrants money it has raised to organizations led by or working closely with BIPOC, immigrant, and refugee communities. Use of grant funds can include but is not limited to: the purchase of food for direct distribution or meal preparation; gift cards/credits to culturally specific markets for community members; food sovereignty projects; farming/agriculture projects; transportation; storage; and distribution costs. Awards are available for up to \$10,000. [READ MORE >](#)

## MAINE'S ROADMAP TO END HUNGER BY 2030 > GOAL B

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### Strategy 4:

#### Improve Nutrition Security by Supporting and Sustaining a Diverse, Local, and Robust Food Supply System in Maine<sup>13</sup>

##### *Proposed Initiatives and Investments:*

- Invest in and strengthen Maine's food infrastructure—from farmland and working waterfront protection to processing capacity to distribution networks—to ensure that Maine-grown and produced, healthy food is abundant and available for all.<sup>14</sup>
- Leverage USDA- and state-supported programs (Maine Harvest Bucks, Farm Fresh Rewards, Maine Senior Farm Share, WIC FMNP, Farm-to-School, Mainers Feeding Mainers, etc.) to maximize the use of local foods in nutrition security programs, particularly those that empower people with the ability to make choices about what types of food they consume.
- Invest in farm, fishery, and food-related businesses as a means for creating living-wage jobs, enabling access to culturally appropriate foods, and contributing to thriving local economies, emphasizing investment in socially disadvantaged producers to address historical inequities.
- Promote personal and regional food self-provisioning and self-sufficiency by protecting and restoring farmland and fisheries and encouraging urban agriculture and community gardens.
- Include all workers—including food supply chain workers—in wage and workplace protections to prevent food insecurity among food system workers.
- Expand food rescue and gleaning programs that collect quality food that would otherwise go to waste and redistribute it to food security and other community-based organizations.



## **C** Promote, Bolster, & Enable Economic Security and Opportunity for All Maine Households

**Ending hunger and ensuring food security means that people in Maine have the resources they need to prevent the difficult tradeoffs caused by economic insecurity and that result in food insecurity.**

Today, too many people encounter barriers to economic security and opportunity in the Maine economy or through safety net programs. As noted throughout, these barriers are not experienced equally across Maine communities; strategies that do not explicitly address these disparities are highly likely to leave them in place.

The existing public benefits system is historically burdensome and often insufficient. As noted in the August 2021 DHHS Lift Report on Measures of Economic Security<sup>15</sup>,

significant efforts are underway to streamline, strengthen, and simplify Maine's public benefits system. In fact, many of the challenges identified during the EH2030 process have been addressed or are targeted for improvement under existing plans. However, and as was also noted in that report and the 2020 LIFT Working Group Report, to keep Maine families out of food insecurity, more work needs to be done. For example, insufficient access to quality, affordable childcare has repeatedly been found to be a barrier keeping heads of households—especially women—out of the workforce or out of higher-paying workforce opportunities. Similarly, high costs of housing, transportation, and healthcare and/or health insurance undermine household financial stability—and thus food security.

Economic security goes far beyond simply being employed. Not all jobs are created equal,

nor are all local infrastructures and economic conditions the same. Investing in supportive infrastructure, as recommended in the Maine Economic Development Strategy 2020-2029<sup>16</sup>, reflects the interconnected and mutually reinforcing systems<sup>17</sup> that can help eliminate these barriers so that all Maine residents can thrive.

Maine is making policy advances—progress that was accelerated by pandemic-related funding for programs and by a pandemic-necessitated willingness to offer flexibility and innovation around how programming is accessed and delivered. Many of these advances are measurably reducing poverty and hunger. It will be crucial to ensure that this progress is safeguarded and institutionalized even after the pandemic subsides.

## MAINE'S ROADMAP TO END HUNGER BY 2030 > GOAL C

### Strategy 1:

**Align Efforts with the 2020–2029 Maine Economic Development Strategy and other State initiatives<sup>18</sup> to Create a Diverse, Inclusive, and Sustainable Economy Where All People of Maine have Access to Good Paying Jobs and the Opportunity to Thrive**

*Proposed Initiatives and Investments:*

- Raise the minimum wage to a thriving wage.
- Focus on equity in the implementation of the Maine Economic Development Strategy and Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan<sup>19</sup>, ensuring, for example, investments

in entrepreneurship and workforce development reach Maine people from historically underrepresented backgrounds.

- Promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in Maine's workforce, including additional training, increased flexibility regarding foreign credentials, etc.
- Support Department of Labor efforts to increase apprenticeship and industry partnership. Emphasize those activities (embedded coaching, evaluation and reporting) demonstrated to support the hiring, retention, and advancement of workers from historically marginalized communities.

- Expand education and training programs with a focus on whole-family approaches<sup>20</sup> that prepare/reskill people for higher-wage jobs and foster economic stability.
- Encourage employer policies and practices that enhance employment stability and opportunity, such as paid family leave; catastrophic leave pools; emergency assistance funds; and more.
- Support efforts to make broadband internet access universally accessible and available to all Maine people, regardless of where they live.



### **THE PLAN IN ACTION: Equity in Economic Development and Recovery Expands Economic Opportunity**

Everyone at the Table calls for economic development efforts to explicitly support groups disproportionately impacted by food insecurity. The Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan has allocated \$3 million for encouraging business diversity. Encouraging and supporting business owners from underrepresented backgrounds will enhance Maine's business diversity, create new investment opportunities, and connect these business owners to further financing options through federal programs. These funds will support technical assistance, outreach, training, marketing, and access-to-capital programs for business owners from underrepresented backgrounds, build upon successful support programs to scale them more broadly, and explore how the State could encourage business diversity through State procurement. [READ MORE >](#)

## MAINE'S ROADMAP TO END HUNGER BY 2030 > GOAL C

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### Strategy 2:

#### Put Maine People at the Center of the Public Benefits System and Align the System's Redesign and Stabilization with the 2020 LIFT Working Group Report<sup>21</sup> and 2021 LIFT Report on Measures of Economic Security

##### *Proposed Initiatives and Investments:*

- Include people accessing the public benefits system or impacted by poverty in program design to ensure programs gain from the expertise of lived experience and meet community needs.
- Assess gaps in federal assistance programs and explore how to best meet them through allocation of state and local resources.
- Coordinate and invest in the establishment of a secure, user-centered, single point of enrollment for State and federal benefits programs. Examples of current or contemplated related or building-block

efforts include:

- Expansion of My Maine Connection
  - Expansion of the Department of Labor's online portal
  - Expanded use of navigators across benefits programs
  - Ensure cross-enrollment for programs for which public benefits recipients are likely eligible (e.g., tax credits, LIHEAP, TANF, WIC).
  - Leverage and enhance existing benefit programs to provide basic income security.
  - Explore innovative models, such as Employment First<sup>22</sup> that provide adequate income supports and employment opportunities for the most vulnerable, including individuals with disabilities and behavioral health disorders, youth exiting foster care, and previously incarcerated people.<sup>23</sup>
- Continue to review and revise policies for benefits to expand eligibility, increase transparency, and remove cliffs and penalties to make it easier to get and keep needed benefits.
  - Continue to review and implement criminal justice reforms that would minimize food insecurity among families of incarcerated or previously incarcerated people.
  - Explore opportunities to support wealth building, such as ABLE Accounts.<sup>24</sup>



**THE PLAN IN ACTION: Expanding the Safety Net Improves Lives and Redresses Inequity**

In Maine, the number of families struggling with child hunger decreased by 6% when monthly payments from the Child Tax Credit program began in July 2021. The expanded child tax credit, which was passed as part of the COVID-19 relief package, resulted in children from the lowest-income households being eligible for the full credit for the first time. While families in all racial and ethnic groups have seen drops in child hunger following the expansion of the tax credit, the gains are especially notable in the Black and Latino communities, where "food hardship rates" are about double that of White people, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. [READ MORE >](#)

**THE PLAN IN ACTION: Integrating Benefits Humanizes the Safety Net**

Getting and keeping the benefits for which one is eligible can itself be a full-time job—one that can be dehumanizing and dispiriting. The State of Minnesota tried to tackle that by creating MNBenefits.mn.gov, an easy-to-use, all-in-one application for safety-net benefits like SNAP, childcare assistance, housing support, and flexible cash. Minnesota residents can now apply for nine different benefits programs through the integrated site, reducing the average time it takes to apply for benefits from 110 minutes to less than 20 minutes, with positive outcomes for clients and caseworkers.

## MAINE'S ROADMAP TO END HUNGER BY 2030 > GOAL C

### Strategy 3:

**Align Efforts with MaineDOT's Impending 2022 Statewide Strategic Transit Plan and Community-Based Transit Plans to Ensure that Transportation is Accessible, Available, and Affordable for All to Connect People to Jobs, Opportunities, and Resources**

*Proposed Initiatives and Investments:*

- Support MaineDOT efforts to develop an innovative, efficient, effective, accessible system that people around the state can use easily and choose to use. Invest in the

expansion of bus lines and other forms of transportation and increase the frequency of service in both urban and rural areas.

- Encourage cities and towns to adopt sustainable community design principles (e.g., walkable and bikeable cities, creating Transit-Oriented Development plans, ensuring complete streets, and protecting open spaces).
- Reduce barriers to private transportation, including the expansion of transitional transportation services to unemployed or low-income families, making driver's

education and licenses more affordable, expanding the use of GO MAINE,<sup>25</sup> and ensuring that historically marginalized communities have equitable access to these programs and resources.



### THE PLAN IN ACTION: **Workforce Transportation Investment Connect People to Opportunity**

Everyone at the Table notes that transportation is frequently a barrier to getting or keeping thriving-wage employment. As recommended by Maine Won't Wait, the State's four-year plan for climate action, the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan has allocated \$5 million to launch a workforce transportation pilot program. Expanding worker access to reliable transportation supports economic security and workforce development, especially in rural areas where transportation options are limited. This funding, as competitive grants from the Department of Transportation, will support local, regional, or state Workforce Transportation Pilot Projects to connect workers and employers and create community and economic benefits with funding for small buses and vans, as well as program start-up costs. [READ MORE >](#)

**Strategy 4:**

**Reduce Housing Instability**

*Proposed Initiatives and Investments:*

- Maximize the use of all available mechanisms (including federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and State investments) to expand incentives for affordable housing development.
- Encourage and incentivize municipalities to reduce zoning and other barriers to the development of affordable housing and the conversion of existing buildings into affordable housing.
- Encourage and advocate for strategies that support affordable homeownership and that enable people to remain in their own homes.
- Increase access to housing vouchers and reduce barriers, exclusionary criteria, and sanctions for individuals using these vouchers.

**THE PLAN IN ACTION: Thoughtful Policy Adjustments Can Reduce Housing Instability**

Having a disability too often leads to food insecurity, and housing insecurity exacerbates food insecurity. How disability assistance is funded and structured can worsen food insecurity because it can force people to choose between receiving the services they need or remaining in their homes. Maine has sought and received Home and Community Based Waivers to redress this weakness in federal policy. Thanks to these waivers, MaineCare can cover life-saving and life-enhancing services for people with disabilities and their care givers while allowing people to remain in the homes and communities that can support them best.



## MAINE'S ROADMAP TO END HUNGER BY 2030 > GOAL C

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### Strategy 5:

#### Make Healthcare Affordable and Accessible for All

##### *Proposed Initiatives & Investments:*

- Increase the affordability of health insurance and the options available to obtain affordable health insurance as is being done via the State of Maine's American Rescue Plan Funding investments.
- Leverage healthcare and health insurance systems to screen for, measure, and address food insecurity and those factors that drive it.
- Close insurance gaps around behavioral health, dental health, and other coverages, the absence of which can drive household expenses, limit work opportunities, or both.
- Restore the capacity of Maine's public health infrastructure.

### Strategy 6:

#### Align Efforts with the Overarching Goals of the Children's Cabinet<sup>26</sup> and the Recommendations of the Economic Recovery Committee<sup>27</sup> to Strengthen the State's Early Care and Education System

##### *Proposed Initiatives & Investments:*

- Increase access to affordable early care and preventive and early intervention services for young children and their families.
- Support expansion of Head Start programs.
- Raise the quality of our early care and education system, and support families to access quality programming.
- Adequately fund childcare programs and benefits, and adjust eligibility and copayment requirements to ensure that childcare and out of school time programs are affordable and accessible for all families who need it.

- Build and retain a skilled early childhood education workforce to prepare children for lifelong academic and career success; partner with the Children's Cabinet and Department of Labor efforts to examine policy options for the state and federal governments to better support the early childhood education workforce with salary supplements, stipends or other forms of compensation to provide opportunities to build career pathways with higher wage opportunities.
- Evaluate and address the current workforce and business model challenges that impede the growth and expansion of childcare programs in our communities.

## MAINE'S ROADMAP TO END HUNGER BY 2030 > GOAL C

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### Strategy 7:

#### Ensure Educational Success for All Students from Pre-Kindergarten Through Post-Secondary

##### *Proposed Initiatives and Investments:*

- Promote post-secondary opportunities for all Maine residents at the vocational, community college, and university levels that support attainment of a post-secondary degree or other recognized credential of value that leads to high-growth jobs. This includes apprenticeships and other credentialing pathways.
- Explore new initiatives to ensure post-secondary program affordability and reduce student debt.
- Increase high school and post-secondary graduation rates, paying special attention to disparate outcomes for students of color and other populations disproportionately impacted by food insecurity.
- Align efforts with workplace development efforts and expand paid internship and apprenticeship opportunities.
- Ensure that educational efforts throughout the state enhance the quality of living and enable citizens to live a life of value.
- Expand and maximize access to programs that support the entrance of those with low incomes to higher education.
- Strengthen linkages between educational institutions and employers to identify workforce development needs and public/private partnerships to meet those needs.
- Think holistically about the overall economic well-being of college students and the other challenges they face, including tuition, debt, and housing.

**D** Change the Narrative of Food Insecurity to Focus on Collective Responsibility & Amplify the Voices of Impacted People

Poverty and hunger in our communities are the result of systemic failures and structural inequities.

Yet in the public conversation about hunger and poverty, one tends to hear a lot about what people who are poor should be doing differently and less about how the systems that create poverty can and must be reformed.

Changing the narrative about food insecurity means shifting the focus from individual blame to an understanding of the historic, social, and economic forces which create and perpetuate poverty—and thus food insecurity.

**Strategy 1:**

**Reframe Hunger and Food Insecurity and their Costs as a Collective Responsibility to Be Addressed with Urgency and Ones That Impact All Maine People**

*Proposed Initiatives & Investments:*

- Develop and implement a human-centered public awareness campaign regarding Everyone at the Table and what is required of us to end hunger in Maine by 2030.
- Emphasize the systemic drivers of hunger and poverty.
- Emphasize the economic and social costs—not just to people who poor and hungry—for allowing hunger to persist.
- Spotlight policy innovations and other successes that are reducing hunger and food insecurity.

**Strategy 2:**

**Empower and Invest in the Leadership & Inclusion of Impacted People**

*Proposed Initiatives & Investments:*

- Build capacity to support individuals with lived experience to take on leadership roles within public and private initiatives addressing hunger and poverty.<sup>28</sup>
- Create or expand tools, resources, and initiatives focused on building the capacity of nonprofit and governmental entities to collaborate across experience, lived and otherwise by:
  - Creating safe and inclusive spaces for collaboration and engagement<sup>29</sup>.
  - Building and strengthening relationships with organizations and groups embedded in impacted communities.

**THE PLAN IN ACTION: Engaging impacted People in Program Design and Implementation Improves Impact**

Inspired, in part, by the work of national poverty expert Dr. Donna Beegle and multiple trainings she has led in Washington County, the Community Caring Collaborative (CCC) supports direct work to address poverty at multiple levels. CCC poverty initiatives, as a whole, are designed to increase awareness, change practice and policies, create necessary supports, and remove barriers for community members impacted by poverty. Neighbor Group is a group of community members currently living in poverty who support each other through sharing resources, organizing guest speakers, and providing input to CCC about developing and incubating programs. [READ MORE >](#)



**THE PLAN IN ACTION: Changing the Narrator Helps Change the Narrative**

"Nothing about us without us" is a rallying cry of democracy going back to the 16th Century. Yet too often, public policies are crafted without the input of people who will be most impacted. Including impacted people was a priority identified in EH2030's 2019 Interim Report. In early 2021, Resources for Social Change (ROSC) was asked to invite people with lived and living experiences of poverty and hunger to weigh in on the policy recommendations made in the Interim Report. This process resulted in the publication of a 32-page report that offered testimonies describing lived experiences of poverty and hunger, feedback on Interim Report recommendations, and community-generated solutions for addressing the root causes of hunger, poverty, and social inequities. Participants continued their engagement in the State's planning efforts to end hunger by 2030 as active members of regional teams that identified assets, opportunities, and a vision for what food secure communities would look like in their region of Maine. [READ MORE >](#)

**Strategy 3:**

**Enlist the Private Sector as Full Partners in the Plan to End Hunger in Maine by 2030**

*Proposed Initiatives and Investments:*

- Develop a private-sector tool kit of policies and practices to address and eliminate hunger and food insecurity in the workforce.
- Engage area chambers of commerce and private industry associations to identify areas of common concern and opportunity.
- Support partnerships with private employers and the public and social sectors to augment efforts to have Maine employers become "employers of choice" by investing in practices such as:
  - family-sustaining wages and benefits,
  - necessary on-the-job training that leads to advancement
  - mentorship and interpersonal supports
  - a fair, safe, and inclusive workplace environment.

**THE PLAN IN ACTION: Employment Policies Can Stabilize Families**

According to the Federal Reserve Bank, more than one-fourth of American adults are just one \$400 financial setback away from being unable to pay their monthly bills.<sup>30</sup> A setback could be a car repair, a hot water tank leak, an illness of a family member, or any number of unexpected expenses. With no savings or buffer, these setbacks can precipitate a food-security crisis, forcing people to choose between eating or dealing with the emergency. An Employee Relief Fund (also called an Employee Assistance Fund) is something employers can establish to help employees cope with unexpected hardships so these setbacks don't place undue financial stress on them and their families. The availability of such a fund also helps position human resource departments as navigators to connect employees with other available resources available inside and outside their organizations. The Maine Credit Union League is one employer who created such a fund. They estimate that seventy-five times since its inception, the fund has prevented financial shocks experienced by team members from snowballing into more dire emergencies.



**E** Close the Equity Gap in Household Food Security by Addressing Underlying Structural Inequities in all Ending Hunger 2030 Goals

In Maine, the prevalence and severity of hunger and food insecurity differ across geography and across household characteristics like race and ethnicity, parental status, and occupation.

Some segments of our population experience food insecurity at a rate 2-4 times higher than the state average. To eliminate hunger in Maine, we need to address the underlying cultural and structural inequities that drive disparities in household food security.

**Strategy 1:**

**Apply an Equity Test to EH2030 Implementation**

*Proposed Initiatives & Investments:*

- In plan implementation, continue to apply equity tools and screens such as those proposed in the 2020 Recommendations to the Legislature from The Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations<sup>31</sup> to ensure disparities are being reduced.
- Partner with and leverage existing public, private, and community-based efforts to promote equity. Examples include:

- Bureau of Rehabilitative Services programs to support individuals with disabilities including progressive employment, benefits counseling, and independent living services.
- Department of Corrections partnerships that create employment opportunities for people involved in the criminal justice system.

**THE PLAN IN ACTION: Seeing Disparate Impacts is a Key Step in Addressing Them**

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services recently established the Office of Population Health Equity (OPHE) within the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) in order to identify and address health disparities in communities throughout Maine. The OPHE is focusing on data-driven interventions to advance health equity for a number of populations, including but not limited to racial and ethnic populations, women, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, and other groups for which disparate health outcomes—and, not coincidentally, disparate food security outcomes—are present in Maine.



**Strategy 2:**

**Prioritize Disproportionately Impacted Communities in Pilot Programs and Include Impacted Voices in the Design and Leadership of Pilots to Ensure Disparities are Addressed as a Priority**

*Proposed Initiatives and Investments:*

- Invest in the design, implementation, and analysis of new strategies and pilot programs intended to support disproportionately impacted communities and which are led by or incorporate input from communities impacted by hunger and food insecurity.

**THE PLAN IN ACTION: Land Access for Socially Disadvantaged and Underserved Farmers is Essential**

Liberation Farms in Wales, Maine is one small but significant step in marginalized farmers achieving land access. Liberation Farms, the Community Farming Program of the Somali Bantu Community Association, provides Somali Bantu families struggling with food insecurity with the tools and resources to grow healthy, culturally-appropriate foods for themselves and their community by securing land and providing access to seeds, training, technical assistance, and marketing. It demonstrates what's possible when marginalized communities have the opportunity to organize and lead themselves. [READ MORE >](#)



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## MAINE'S ROADMAP TO END HUNGER BY 2030 > ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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p. 5: Blue Arauz

p. 7 & p. 22: Hillary Holmes /  
Green Barn Studio

p. 11: Shreyas Sane

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Al May	Penelope Prize	Dixie Lee Shaw	<b>Organizations</b>	Full Plates Full Potential
Kim McKeage	Jennifer Quimby	Melissa Shea	AK Health & Social Services	Good Shepherd Food Bank
Dawn McLaughlin	Amanda Rector	Abdikhadar Shire	Aroostook County Action Program	Goodwill of Northern New England
Rich Meserve	Amy Regan Gallant	Marsha Sloan	Augusta Food Bank	Gorham Savings Bank
Rep. Michele Meyer	Tabatha Remeschatis	Kathy Smith	Avesta Housing	Governor's Office of Policy, Innovation, and the Future
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Maine Center for Economic Policy	Maine Network of Community Food Councils	RSU 5	Washington County, Maine (county gov.)
Maine Community Health Needs Assessment	Maine Roads to Quality	RSU 10	Westbrook School Department
Maine Credit Union League	Maine Seacoast Mission	RSU 24	Winslow Food Cupboard
Maine Department of Administrative & Financial Services	Mid Coast Hunger Prevention Program	RSU 68	York County Community Action
Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, & Forestry	Midcoast Maine Community Action	Rural Community Action Ministry	York County Community College
Maine Department of Economic & Community Development	MSAD 41	Southern Maine Community College	Youth Full Maine
Maine Department of Education	New Mainers Public Health Initiative	St. Mary's Nutrition Center	
Maine Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Family Independence	New Ventures Maine	Sunrise County Economic Council	
Maine Education Association	Northern Light Health	Survivor Speak USA	
Maine Equal Justice Partners	Northern Maine Development Commission	Tedford Housing	
Maine Federation of Farmers Markets	Penquis Community Action Program	Ummah Gardens	
Maine Food Convergence	Piscataquis Regional Food Center	United Way of Southern Maine	
Maine General Housing	Preble Street	University of Maine	
Maine Immigrant Rights Coalition	Presente! Maine	University of Maine Cooperative Extension	
	Prosperity Maine	University of Southern Maine	
	Resources for Organizing and Social Change	Washington County Career Centers	
	River Valley Healthy Communities	Washington County Community College	
	RSU 3	Washington County Emergency Management Agency	

## MAINE'S ROADMAP TO END HUNGER BY 2030 > ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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### Materials Informing the Development of the Plan:

The plan was informed by EH2030 process content, an extensive review of national evidence-based and local food insecurity research and reports, and existing State plans and initiatives.

### Process Content:

- [Ending Hunger in Maine by 2030: Interim Report to the Legislature](#)
- Resources for Organizing and Social Change: [Impacted Community Recommendations and Review on the Interim Report for Ending Hunger in Maine by 2030](#)
- Regional Narratives from EH2030 Phase III ([text and audio versions](#))
- What We Heard in Phase III (Appendix 2)

### State Plans, Reports, & Initiatives:

- [Maine Economic Development Strategy 2020-2029, a Focus on Talent and Innovation](#)
- [Governor's Economic Recovery Committee Economic Support and Stabilization Recommendations](#)
- [Maine Won't Wait, A Four-Year Plan for Climate Action](#)
- [Maine Children's Cabinet: A Plan for Young Children](#)
- [DHHS 2020 Lift Working Group Report: Reduce Child Poverty by Leveraging Investments So Families Can Thrive](#)
- [DHHS 2021 LIFT Report on Measures of Child and Family Economic Security for Families Participating in Maine's Public Assistance Programs](#)

- [Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations: Recommendations to the Legislature \(September 2020\)](#)
- [The New England Food Vision](#)
- [Transit Tomorrow: The Long-Range Public Transportation Plan for Greater Portland, Maine \(2020-2050\)](#)
- [Maine Department of Labor Workforce Strategy](#)



" Creating legislation and system change requires a personal change as well. Asking anyone who benefits from the system to change it is going to be hard, because they don't want to give up their place in power. The first step in this change is for the non-poor to realize that every single human deserves food, clothes, healthcare, and other resources. Not only the bare minimum, but GOOD food, clothes, and healthcare as well. See us as equals. "

– PARTICIPANT OF IMPACTED COMMUNITY REVIEW PROCESS, JUNE, 2021 –

## FOOTNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> [Definition and ranges of household food security, USDA ERS](#)
- <sup>2</sup> [Household Food Security in the United States in 2020](#), USDA
- <sup>3</sup> Gundersen, C., Strayer, M., Dewey, A., Hake, M., & Engelhard, E. (2021). Map the Meal Gap 2021: An Analysis of County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2019. Feeding America.
- <sup>4</sup> Myall, J. 2019. [Issue Brief: Food Insecurity in Maine](#). (MECEP).
- <sup>5</sup> US Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Food Security Supplement (2015-2017), Analysis by Maine Center for Economic Policy (MECEP)
- <sup>6</sup> Feeding America estimates that 43% of food insecure households in Maine have incomes above the current gross income threshold for SNAP in Maine, 185% FPL (2019). <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2019/overall/maine>
- <sup>7</sup> [Ending Hunger in Maine by 2030 Interim Report to the Legislature, 2020](#)
- <sup>8</sup> Engelhard, E. & M. Hake (2020). [Food Security Evidence Review: Key Drivers and What Works To Improve Food Security](#). Available from Feeding America.
- <sup>9</sup> Myall, J. 2019. [Issue Brief: Food Insecurity in Maine](#). (MECEP).
- <sup>10</sup> [U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey](#). (2021)
- <sup>11</sup> <https://www.raceforward.org/practice/tools/racial-equity-impact-assessment-toolkit>
- <sup>12</sup> Feeding America, Impact of Hunger, <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/impact-of-hunger>
- <sup>13</sup> The New England Food Vision has called for 50% of New England's food to be produced in the region by 2060. <https://foodsolutionsne.org/a-new-england-food-vision/>
- <sup>14</sup> This also aligns with the Maine Won't Wait Climate Action Plan which advocates that by 2030, 30% of the food Maine people eat will come from Maine [https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov/future/files/inline-files/MaineWontWait\\_December2020.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov/future/files/inline-files/MaineWontWait_December2020.pdf)
- <sup>15</sup> <http://legislature.maine.gov/doc/6990>
- <sup>16</sup> [https://www.maine.gov/decd/sites/maine.gov/decd/files/inline-files/DECD\\_120919\\_sm.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/decd/sites/maine.gov/decd/files/inline-files/DECD_120919_sm.pdf)
- <sup>17</sup> The State economic development plan identifies supportive infrastructure as transportation, housing, health care, early care and education/out of school time programs, and PK-16 education
- <sup>18</sup> Includes Department of Labor initiatives
- <sup>19</sup> <https://www.maine.gov/covid19/sites/maine.gov/covid19/files/inline-files/MaineJobs%26RecoveryPlan.pdf>
- <sup>20</sup> The fundamental goal of two-generation work is to build family well-being by intentionally working with children and the adults in their lives simultaneously.
- <sup>21</sup> <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov/dhhs/files/inline-files/Reduce%20Child%20Poverty%20by%20Leveraging%20Investments%20so%20Families%20Can%20Thrive%20%28LD%201774%29%20--%20Cover%20Letter%20and%20Report%209-2020.pdf>

## FOOTNOTES

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<sup>22</sup> <https://employmentfirstmaine.org/>

<sup>23</sup> This NIH study A Pilot Study Examining Food Insecurity and HIV Risk Behaviors among Individuals Recently Released from Prison found that 91% of incarcerated people returning to the community qualified as food insecure <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3733343/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.ablenrc.org/state-review/maine>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.gomaine.org/>

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov/future/files/inline-files/GOPIF\\_CC\\_PlanYoungChildren.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov/future/files/inline-files/GOPIF_CC_PlanYoungChildren.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> [https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov/future/files/inline-files/Maine%20ERC%20Report\\_FINAL\\_11242020.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov/future/files/inline-files/Maine%20ERC%20Report_FINAL_11242020.pdf) Includes Department of Labor initiatives

<sup>28</sup> This was included in the 2020 LIFT Working Group Recommendations.

<sup>29</sup> <https://results4america.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Tokenization-Handout-and-Worksheet.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/2021-economic-well-being-of-us-households-in-2020-dealing-with-unexpected-expenses.htm>

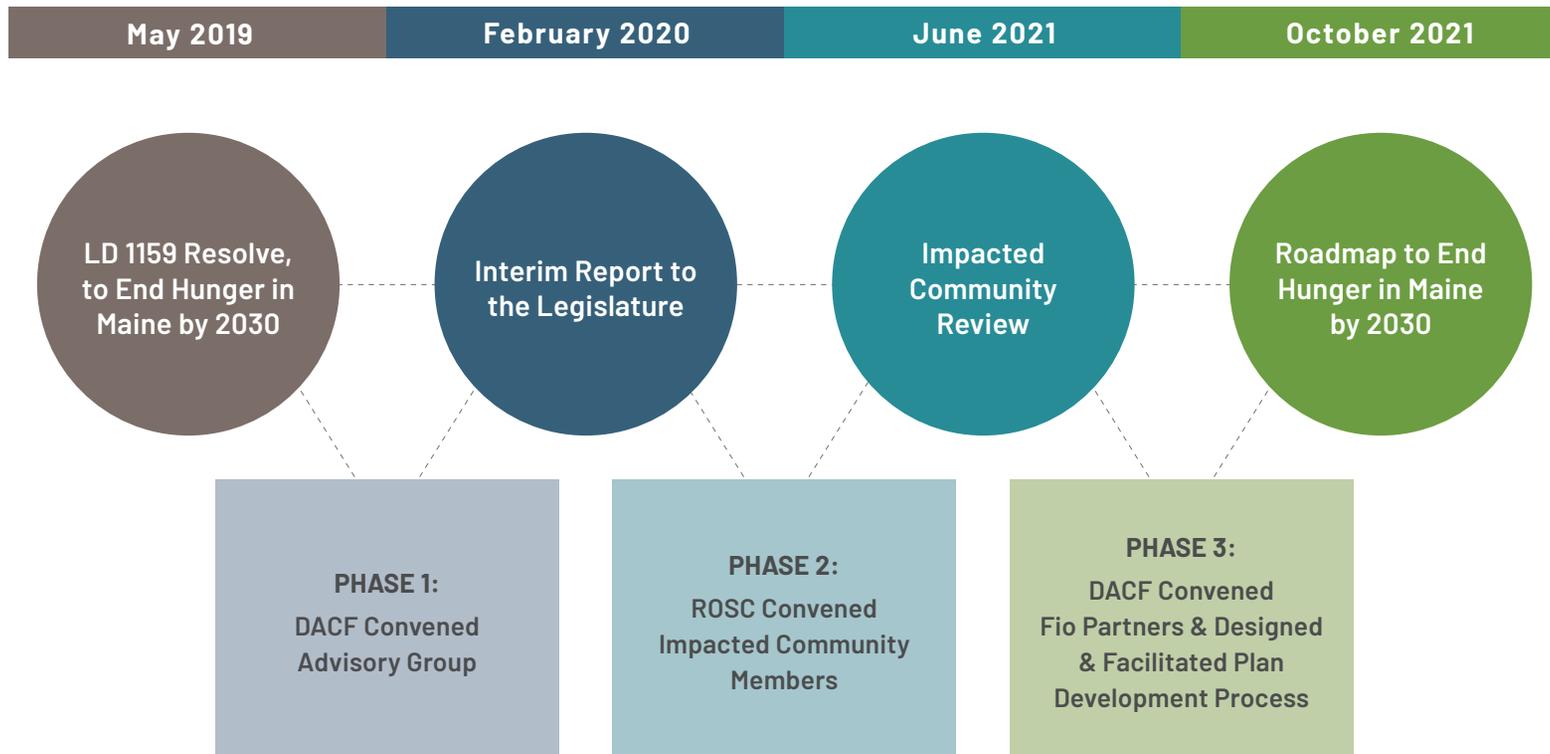
<sup>31</sup> [https://www.maine.gov/labor/pcrit/reports/2020\\_LegReport.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/labor/pcrit/reports/2020_LegReport.pdf), p. 29-32,



## APPENDIX 1 - Our Process

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### THE THREE PHASES OF WORK TO DEVELOP MAINE'S ROADMAP TO END HUNGER BY 2030



## APPENDIX 1 - Our Process

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Maine's Plan to End Hunger by 2030 represents the culmination of three phases of work which were set in motion by the passage of LD 1159 Resolve, To End Hunger in Maine by 2030 in May 2019, and engaged the expertise and experience of over 200 people of Maine.

### PHASE I

Following the directive of LD1159, the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry (DACF) convened a 24-member Advisory Group that undertook a process of research, analysis, and planning to lay the groundwork for creating a comprehensive strategic plan to eliminate hunger in the state by 2030. DACF staff compiled and reviewed past and ongoing Maine anti-hunger efforts and scanned related initiatives from across the country. Forty-five subject matter experts were interviewed. Over the course of three formal meetings and many more work sessions, the Advisory Group contributed its strategic thinking.

The result was an Interim Report delivered to the Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry on February 20, 2020. DACF Commissioner Beal did a presentation of the report to the ACF Committee on March 3, 2020 which accepted the findings that:

- Quantified the target for ending hunger: 4% low food security and 0% very low food security (as measured annually by the USDA)
- Outlined the nature and scale of the problem
- Created a framework of strategic priorities for ending hunger
- Outlined a work plan for a comprehensive strategic plan development process

The Interim Report recommended that an expanded Advisory Group be formed in order to reflect:

- The diverse communities disproportionately impacted by hunger and food insecurity in Maine
- The cross-sector and cross-experience expertise and commitments needed to end hunger.

### PHASE II

Almost immediately following the ACF Committee's acceptance of the Interim Report, the next phase of work was interrupted by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic that necessitated emergency reallocation of State funding. Work picked back up again in the summer of 2020 with generous support from philanthropic donors.

Phase II focused on engaging people in Maine directly impacted by hunger and food insecurity. DACF invited Resources for Organizing and Social Change (ROSC), a grassroots organization that supports people in Maine engaged in social change work, to convene an independent process for people with lived and living experience of food insecurity and hunger to review and provide a supplemental commentary on the Interim Report. A total of 17 individuals from across the State participated over five sessions to develop the Impacted Community Recommendations and Review on the Interim Report for Ending Hunger in Maine by 2030 (The Impacted Community Review).

The Impacted Community Review provided a compelling, first-person portrait of how hunger and poverty are experienced in Maine, along with solutions recommended for inclusion in the strategic plan. Furthermore, it affirmed the need to center the urgency and unique insights that only people navigating poverty and all that entails can provide.

Following the recommendations of the Interim Report, staff engaged Fio Partners to design and facilitate the final strategic plan development process (Phase III). Additionally, staff conducted a far-reaching outreach campaign to engage a broad group of stakeholders from across Maine to join participants from Phase I & II in that process.

## APPENDIX 1 - Our Process

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### PHASE III

With the learnings of Phase I and Phase II in hand, we embarked upon Phase III. Phase III was undertaken with consulting and facilitation support from Fio Partners and included participants from the first two phases plus an expanded group of stakeholders representing every corner of Maine. Throughout the summer and early fall of 2021, Phase III brought together those whose expertise derived from their professional affiliations and those whose expertise derived from their first-hand experience of the problem. In total, 140 people participated in Phase III bringing the total number of participants to over 200. Phase III contributors worked across experience, geography, and sector to create Maine's Roadmap to End Hunger by 2030.

#### PARTICIPANTS

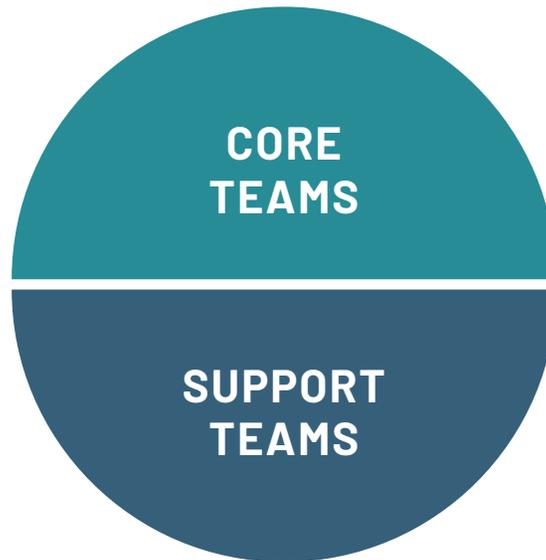
##### *Organized Regionally*

- Impacted Community Members
- Local public & private sector stakeholders

#### PARTICIPANTS

##### *Organized by content area*

- Statewide public & private sector & stakeholders



#### ROLE

- Develop narratives of the experience & drivers of food insecurity in their community
- Recommend priorities & strategies

#### ROLE

- Translate Core Team & Phase I & II learnings into plan recommendations
- Mobilize immediate responses & identify funding for implementation

## APPENDIX 1 - Our Process

### PHASE III PLANNING STRUCTURE

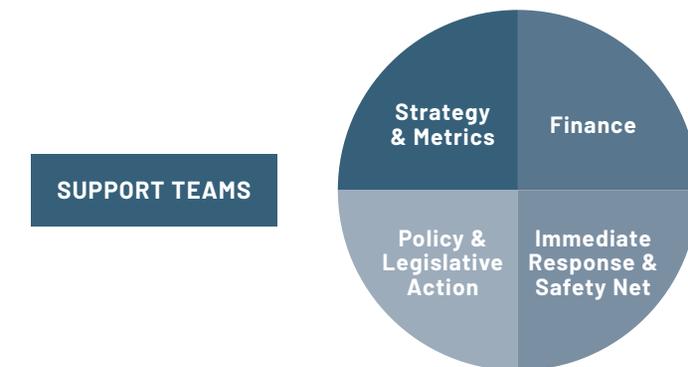
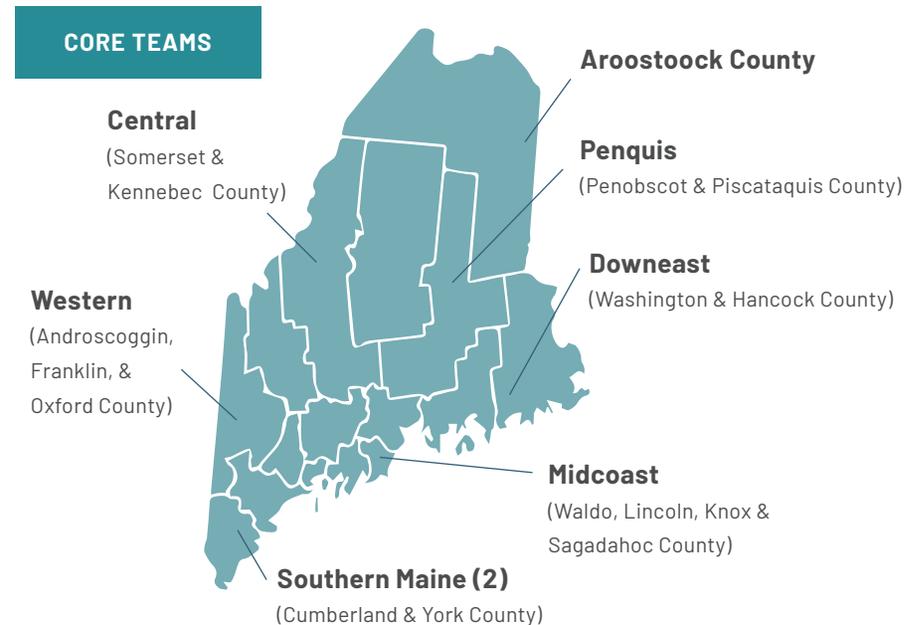
Phase III participants were organized into two sets of workgroups: Core Teams and Support Teams. The eight Core Teams were organized by region, roughly tracking the State's regional health districts. These teams served as the continuing voice of people with lived and living experience in conjunction with influencers, decision-makers, and service providers operating in the respective regions. Core Teams were tasked with developing a unique narrative explaining their regional food insecurity data, identifying local assets and constraints, and recommending initiatives and "best fit" solutions. Organizing by region also created a platform to create and strengthen relationships that can be leveraged to support the implementation of this plan.

In addition to the regional Core Teams, four Support Teams were tasked with translating the Community Review and Core Team learnings into plan recommendations. Participants in these four Support Teams included a range of statewide public, nonprofit, and private sector stakeholders, including a broad representation of community organizations, legislators, state agency leaders, and others.

All together, the Phase III process involved two plenary all-team meetings plus three or more meetings per team. A high-level of participation and collaboration then continued through the plan editing and review process. This included feedback through surveys, emails, and conversations with EH2030 participants and key stakeholders in state government, along with targeted meetings focused on reviewing the plan through an equity lens and gathering input from impacted community members involved in Phase II and III of the process.

In all, more than 200 individuals from across the state have participated in one phase or another of the plan development process. Wherever applicable, we have leveraged the participation of many more individuals through aligning this plan with several State plans as outlined in the Acknowledgments.

### CORE TEAM & SUPPORT TEAM STRUCTURES



## APPENDIX 2 - What We Heard: The conversations that drove the design of Roadmap

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The process to develop Maine's Roadmap to End Hunger by 2030 leveraged the power of conversation across difference. As the old adage goes, where you stand depends on where you sit. As the problem-solving table expanded across the three phases of work, our understanding of the issue of hunger and food insecurity in Maine deepened immensely. Along the way, we laid the foundation for the increased capacity and commitment needed to implement the Roadmap. Importantly, starting Phase III with both the Interim Report and the Impacted Community Review in hand firmly grounded and centered the planning process around the expertise, dignity, and humanity of Maine people directly affected by hunger, food insecurity, and poverty.

Below is a summary of the themes that emerged from the conversations in Phase III of the process, representing decades of combined experience navigating and addressing the problem at hand. These insights, combined with data, research, analysis, and the learnings from Phases I and II of the process, drove the design of the Plan. For further details, including the comprehensive Regional Narratives which offer historical context and a deeper dive into region-specific factors and solutions, see the Phase III link above.

### **The Need to Build the Infrastructure & Capacity to Coordinate Implementation of Maine's Roadmap to End Hunger by 2030**

The EH2030 Interim Report identified a need for increased coordination among Maine's broad network of actors addressing food insecurity. That priority was echoed and underscored throughout the planning process. Empowered by a deeper, shared understanding of the problem of food insecurity and a vision for ending hunger, contributors homed in on the type of infrastructure and capacity building needed to implement the EH2030 Roadmap. The themes that emerged in this area were focused on the need for state-level coordination, regional collaboration, a community governance model, and the need to invest in more robust data systems for tracking progress and identifying equity gaps.

### **Priorities Identified for State-Level Coordination, Regional Collaboration, & Community Governance**

- Increase efficiency, avoid duplication, maximize human and intellectual capital, minimize competition for funding, take a more strategic approach by connecting efforts outside of and within state government, and maximize federal resources through state-level coordination.
- Strong support for a **EH2030 coordinator embedded in state government** that acts as a:
  - Liaison between state departments and agencies contributing to EH2030 goals.
  - Point person for nonprofit and private sector stakeholders.
  - Convener of regional groups contributing to the EH2030 goals, creating regular opportunities for information sharing, resource connections, strategic learning, and EH2030 implementation updates. Some suggested quarterly updates and annual meetings.

## APPENDIX 2 - What We Heard: The conversations that drove the design of Roadmap

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- Widespread interest in seeing coordination between DACF's EH2030 Roadmap and DECD's Economic Development Plan to see where there is overlap and how state funding can achieve the goals of both plans.
- Regional stakeholders expressed a need for:
  - **Funding to implement strategies at the community level.** A pool of funding for those interested in undertaking EH2030 strategies, including funding for staff and staff capacity building.
  - Help with infrastructure, logistical strategies, and technical assistance.
- Interest in a community governance approach to coordination:
  - Participants across the EH2030 process felt strongly about the need to follow the lead of impacted community members and wanted to see that reflected in the plan implementation approach.
- A more robust data system may require State investment.
- There is also a lack of data about who is utilizing food pantries, which have their own individual intake processes. This data is critical to understanding if pantry-based solutions are reaching the most disproportionately impacted groups.
- Opportunities:
  - **Leverage and partner with the work of the newly formed Office of Population Health Equity (OPHE) within the Maine CDC.**
  - Ongoing communications work that combines storytelling with data was seen as a powerful tool for realizing the EH2030 goals.

### The Need to Invest in Data Systems to Track Progress & Identify Equity Gaps

- Accountability mechanisms and benchmarks are needed to track progress, impact, and equity in the implementation of the EH2030 Roadmap.
- Data Challenges:
  - **We don't have disaggregated household food insecurity data.** The USDA provides state-level data on household-level food insecurity. Feeding America estimates state-level child food insecurity rates and rates of individual food insecurity at the county level. State-level data disaggregated by household characteristics like race and ethnicity, is not available and difficult to estimate.
  - **Data on public benefit utilization rates is very difficult to obtain.** Participants would like to see a commitment to making that data accessible and easy to find.

## APPENDIX 2 - What We Heard: The conversations that drove the design of Roadmap

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### The Need to Ensure Easy & Consistent Access to Healthy and Culturally Appropriate Food for All Food Insecure Mainers, When & Where they Need it by 2025

#### Nonprofit & Community-Based Food Assistance

Long referred to as the "emergency food system," the charitable food network has become a permanent, though imperfect source of subsistence for countless households facing chronic food insecurity. The food bank network is doubtlessly a lifeline, but throughout the EH2030 process both providers and recipients raised concerns about critical gaps between available food resources and people experiencing food insecurity. Those seeking food assistance talked about numerous barriers to accessing food pantries, like limited service hours and lack of transportation. Meanwhile, food assistance providers explained that it's not a lack of sufficient food that's the problem, it's getting the food they have to the people who need it.

Challenges in nonprofit and community-based food assistance programs identified by impacted people and providers in the EH2030 process can be summarized as:

- **Physical access due to transportation and personal mobility limitations** - particularly in rural communities, and for the elderly and people with disabilities.
- **Stigma (the experience of blame and shame)** which prevents people from seeking assistance, and can make for bad experiences when they do. This can be especially intense in small, rural communities.
- **A mismatch between the food available and food preferences** (cultural, dietary, etc.) and **ability to prepare or store** (lack of equipment or physical limitations).
- **Limited hours of operation, often during traditional work hours.**
- **Reliance on volunteers to deliver services at food pantries limits capacity for service delivery** and limits oversight around equity in service delivery. This affects capacity to expand service hours and scope of assistance (e.g. SNAP application assistance), and to improve user experience. The aging volunteer population and lack

of a succession pipeline is also a growing concern. The food bank model, with a network of independent food pantry organizations, limits oversight around equity in service delivery.

- **Silos, competition, and friction between local providers** was cited by some as a factor limiting impact in their community.
- **Restrictions at food pantries related to town of residence, frequency of visits,** and other factors at food pantries were frequently cited as barriers to accessing food assistance or factors contributing to negative experiences.
- **A no-questions-asked approach was suggested by many participants,** who cited qualifications, restrictions, applications, and intake processes as barriers to accessing food resources.

Amidst the challenges there were bright spots. Participants spoke highly of food assistance providers that exemplify an ideal of dignity and community care, with low-barriers like no-questions-asked policies, a high-level of food choice, easy access, responsiveness to cultural preferences, and connections to other resources. The models that are working well for impacted people offer important insight into where scaling up local innovation and increasing cross-sector investment and collaboration can build the capacity to respond more effectively to food insecurity today and, ideally, to prevent food insecurity tomorrow. Examples include:

- **Food resource centers like the AIO Food Pantry in Rockland** which strives to replicate the choice of a grocery store shopping experience and integrates complementary resources like heating and utility bill assistance.
- **Embedded, rather than stand-alone, food pantries** like a pilot program at the Port Fairfield Health Care facility in Aroostook County that uses a two-question screening tool to identify food insecurity and connect people with food resources.
- **Mutual aid models like Presente! Maine's Food Brigade,** a grassroots, community-based effort that delivers culturally-responsive food guided by a principle of barrier-free aid, which reduces stigma.

## APPENDIX 2 - What We Heard: The conversations that drove the design of Roadmap

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### Federal Nutrition Programs & Policies

The EH2030 conversations highlighted the fact that federal nutrition programs are among the most powerful tools available for addressing food insecurity today. These include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and child nutrition programs like the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP), among others. As was the case with nonprofit food assistance programs, the challenges and opportunities identified by participants were around barriers to accessing these resources. These include physical, technological, cultural, and regulatory barriers.

### Challenges & Opportunities:

- **Income thresholds for nutrition programs like SNAP & WIC (185% federal poverty level) are too low to fully capture need.** Participants administering these programs expressed frustration around having to deny benefits to people in dire need because they are just over the income limit.
- Participation in SNAP & WIC needs to be expanded to maximize impact and leverage federal funds.
  - Increase awareness and change perception of SNAP, emphasizing that it is supported by federal funding and addressing stigma.
  - Target outreach to particular communities that are not being reached, or not utilizing benefits.
  - Streamline benefit applications and increase accessibility
    - One-stop application
    - Reduce wait times on the phone
    - Address transportation barriers that are exacerbated by the need to go to different offices for different programs.
  - Leverage programs with similar eligibility criteria to maximize participation in available programs. (e.g., promoting SNAP amongst Senior Farm Share program participants)
- Immigration status affects program eligibility for SNAP and other programs.
- The WIC program is underutilized. The requirement for someone to be 'at nutritional risk' to be eligible can pose a barrier. There are opportunities to develop strategies to improve understanding of barriers and expand participation.
- **There are opportunities to maximize the impact of child nutrition programs.**
  - The Summer Meal Program poses transportation challenges.
  - Kids need a ride to get there from their parents, but parents cannot eat there.
  - Opportunities to embed other services at summer meal sites, and connect parents to additional resources.
  - There is a need to streamline distribution and strengthen food processing infrastructure to maximize the use of Maine's Local Foods Fund which shares cost with school systems that purchase local foods.

## APPENDIX 2 - What We Heard: The conversations that drove the design of Roadmap

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### The Need to Promote, Bolster, & Enable Economic Security and Opportunity for All Maine Households

Systemic barriers to making ends meet surfaced as a key root cause of food insecurity throughout the EH2030 planning process. While some parts of Maine are doing well economically, plan participants shared that overall, the economic dislocation of the past decades has left many residents working lower wage, service-economy jobs. A lack of jobs that pay a living wage, much less a thriving wage, combined with increased costs of living and a mismatch between the location of affordable housing and available good-paying jobs, were cited as critical drivers of poverty and food insecurity.

The themes that emerged around economic security included factors influencing **income**—workforce and economic development issues, wages and employment practices, and the public benefit programs that low-income households and those unable to participate in the workforce rely upon—and factors influencing **cost of living and access to economic opportunity and stability**, like transportation, childcare, education, and housing. These themes are summarized below.

#### Income Challenges: Low Wages & Public Assistance Gaps & Barriers

- **Lack of living wage jobs** was one of the most prevalent themes that emerged during discussions around the drivers of food insecurity. The prevalence of inconsistent and/or seasonal work was identified as another key factor contributing to economic instability.
  - Participants advocated for economic and workforce development strategies that would grow good-paying job opportunities and bring more income into struggling communities.
  - Participants also called for raising the minimum wage, citing that the current level is not enough to make ends meet, and emphasized the important role that employer practices and policies play in employment stability and working conditions.

- **Public benefit income thresholds and the Federal poverty line are too low.** Many participants impacted by food insecurity explained that they do not have the resources they need but are told that they are not poor and do not qualify for public assistance - a problem echoed by providers. As a result, many working families and households just over the benefits threshold have no safety net to fill in the gaps, and pride and fear of stigma can be a barrier to seeking charitable food assistance.
- **Navigating public benefit systems can be daunting, time-consuming, not user-friendly, and at times, demeaning.** As one impacted community member explained, "If you need any kind of assistance, it's like a full time job" - a problem that can contribute to the cycle of poverty.
  - Enrolling in and maintaining benefits is a complex process with much room for error, exacerbated by siloed, rather than integrated processes for each program.
  - Transportation to public benefit offices also presents a barrier, made worse by the need to travel to different offices for each program. Participants felt that practices instituted during the pandemic, like phone and online options, were an improvement.
  - Benefit cliffs were cited as a major barrier to escaping a cycle of poverty and achieving economic security.
  - The time-lag between seeking and receiving benefits can be extremely long, and especially problematic for immediate, emergency needs like food access.
- **Strong support and consensus around the need for streamlined public benefit applications.** Participants representing regions across Maine and across professional and lived experience with the problem of food insecurity emphasized creating a streamlined application process for public benefits as a priority - one that felt especially achievable and incredibly impactful.

## APPENDIX 2 - What We Heard: The conversations that drove the design of Roadmap

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- **Public benefits are often insufficient or unavailable for those who cannot work because of disability or caregiving responsibilities.** Many participants emphasized the importance of ensuring a reasonable standard of living for those who cannot work for reasons like disability, and must subsist solely on public benefits which keep people living in poverty. Those who cannot work because of their role as a primary caregiver for a family member are especially vulnerable and without sufficient resources or benefits geared towards their circumstances. This was one of many topic areas where strong support for a universal basic income program was expressed.
- Transportation costs and needs have increased, particularly for low-income people, as a result of the growing mismatch between the location of job opportunities and the location of affordable housing. For example, participants explained that with declining employment opportunities in the northern Oxford County area, it takes reliable transportation to get to employment in the Lewiston area.
- Getting a driver's license can be prohibitively expensive and presents language and cultural barriers for New Mainers.

### Barriers to Opportunity & Economic Security

- **The high cost of living in Maine for housing, utilities, food, childcare and other basic needs** was a key challenge raised by participants. Coupled with low wages, this issue exacerbates the challenge of making ends meet in Maine.
- **Housing availability and affordability issues are one of the primary drivers of food insecurity.**
  - The housing market is increasingly competitive and unaffordable. There is a low housing stock, with a lack of adequate quality housing in rural communities.
- **Transportation issues impact access to food, opportunity, and services, and are connected to housing and workforce issues.**
  - Accessing and maintaining personal transportation and car insurance is expensive, and public transportation infrastructure and services are limited in Maine. For example, the Greater Bangor bus system ends at 6 PM, doesn't run on Sundays, and has limited routes.

## APPENDIX 2 - What We Heard: The conversations that drove the design of Roadmap

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### The Need to Change the Narrative of Food Insecurity to Focus on Collective Responsibility & Center the Voices of Impacted People

A common theme emerged early on among participants in the EH2030 process: the need to change the narrative around food insecurity in terms of how we understand the problem, and the assumptions that limit the effectiveness of our solutions.

#### The Problem with the Dominant Narratives Around Food Insecurity

- Participants expressed deep frustration that **the prevailing culture focuses blame on impacted individuals—for instance, for “not working hard enough”—rather than systemic causes.** As one participant described it, “people who do experience poverty or food insecurity face stigma and are being blamed as if they have chosen to be in this situation. No one is choosing to be poor.”
- **Stigma prevents people from seeking assistance and can make for negative experiences when they do.** Stigma is an issue that is present in the culture-at-large, and many participants also talked about experiencing it in charitable and public assistance settings. Stigma can also have an especially strong impact in small, rural communities, causing some to travel long distances for food assistance to avoid being seen seeking services in their own communities.
- **A lack of understanding about food insecurity from both the public and decision-makers can contribute to the judgment, marginalization, and disempowerment experienced by those struggling with food and economic insecurity.** There was strong support among EH2030 participants for countering this misunderstanding by giving a bigger platform to the voice of lived experience when the problem is described and where solution design and decision-making takes place.
- **Harmful and inaccurate narratives about the experience and cause of food insecurity get in the way of developing more effective solutions to the problem.** As one participant with lived experience put it, “So often the solutions we talk about are more education and more job training and

how the person should be working harder and different like they are the problem. That puts the onus on us, instead of ... what are the root causes?”

- **Some felt that the emphasis on charitable food system solutions created a false sense among decision-makers that the problem was solved.**

Participants envisioned that narrative change would:

- **Emphasize collective responsibility** and community over the mindset of “pull yourself up by your bootstraps,” and focus on the conditions and systems that create the problem.
- Describe the problem in a way that **centers the human experience and acknowledges trauma.**
- **More storytelling from lived experience and more engagement of those with lived experience in policy-making and program-design activities.**
- Shine a light on the fact that **food and economic insecurity impacts working families and people above the poverty line.**
- **Food insecurity cannot be solved by the charitable food system alone.**
- **Educate the public** around the complexity of the issue.
- **Reinforce the idea that impacted people are deserving of action and solutions, and are not regarded as “the problem.”**

## APPENDIX 2 - What We Heard: The conversations that drove the design of Roadmap

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### The Need to Close the Equity Gap in Household Food Security by Addressing Underlying Structural Inequities in all Ending Hunger 2030 Goals

Communities of color in Maine are experiencing food insecurity at rates two to four times higher than the state average, as detailed earlier in the report. The voices of some of the people represented by the data made the point clearly in the Impacted Community Review that, “you can’t solve hunger without addressing poverty, and you can’t address poverty without acknowledging and addressing structural racism in both the design and execution of our policies.”

The EH2030 priorities of engaging impacted people and paying particular attention to how decisions and recommendations may affect groups differently (using an equity lens), were underscored by participants throughout the process as critical to closing the equity gap as we work towards ending hunger in Maine. Below are key themes which emerged among EH2030 participants around the topic of equity as it relates to food insecurity.

- **A one-size-fits-all approach to addressing food insecurity can perpetuate and exacerbate inequities.** For example:
  - Participants with a disability or a caregiving responsibility which prevents them from working found their circumstances unaddressed by workforce-based strategies.
  - Food assistance providers talked about recognizing the importance of providing culturally-relevant food for immigrant communities who are disproportionately impacted by food insecurity.
- **There is a need for targeted strategies** that focus on groups most disproportionately impacted by food and economic insecurity.
- **Racial equity gaps in food insecurity today are the result of structural racism** which has deep historical roots nationally and in Maine.

- **Racialized narratives contribute to stigma and pit impacted groups against one another**, ultimately hurting everyone by discouraging systemic solutions that would improve quality of life for all Mainers.
- **Participants were eager to see identification of disparities turn into concrete action and investment** in historically marginalized and disproportionately impacted communities.

We also heard and learned from our own planning process that there are power dynamics at play in our efforts at problem solving that perpetuate the marginalization of impacted individuals and limit the impact of our efforts. Participants encouraged people in power—predominantly white people—to create space at the proverbial table for impacted community members to hold leadership positions and influence decision-making.

## APPENDIX 3 - Recommended Metrics for an Accountability & Impact Dashboard

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### Data Considerations for Tracking Our Progress, Measuring Our Impact, and Reporting Our Results

An oft-heard theme in the planning process was that data tracking will be critical during the implementation of Maine's Roadmap to End Hunger by 2030 to ensure public accountability, support strategic learning, measure progress and impact, and address equity gaps. One of the challenges in developing a public report card for ending hunger in Maine by 2030 is that the breadth and depth of data needed may not exist in some cases and may not provide the level of specificity in other cases. Goal A of the Plan recommends building the capacity of State data systems. An annually-updated data dashboard could be utilized to capture metrics, and data included should meet the following criteria wherever possible:

- Data should be available from publicly accessible and accepted sources.
- Data should be available for disaggregation by demographic, geographic, and other subsets of the population to measure disparities.
- Data should measure our short term goal of responding to the immediate needs of hunger and food insecurity today, and the long term goal of changing the underlying conditions that create hunger and food insecurity.
- Data should measure both the outcomes and impact that plan efforts are producing for people and on the underlying systems that the plan seeks to change.

## APPENDIX 3 - Recommended Metrics for an Accountability & Impact Dashboard

### OUTCOMES FOR PEOPLE

OUTCOME	CANDIDATE METRIC	SOURCE (if Known)
Primary Outcome: Improved Household Food Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced Food Insecurity                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of Maine households experiencing low food security</li> <li>• % of Maine households experiencing very low food security</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	USDA, ERS
Improved Economic Security & Opportunity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Median household income</li> <li>• Improved Housing Stability</li> <li>• Increased Employment and Workforce Participation Rates</li> </ul>	
Improved Health Outcomes & Social Determinants of Health:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key metrics to be selected from the Maine CHNA dashboard</li> </ul>	Maine Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA)
Improved Social Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population level access to affordable childcare</li> <li>• Population level access to affordable, reliable transportation</li> </ul>	

### OTHER INDICATORS

- Demonstrable Cost Offsets/Return on Investment
- Improved Public Perception as it Relates to People Experiencing Food Insecurity



MAINE'S ROADMAP TO END HUNGER by 2030 was commissioned by:



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