

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 776

AN ACT TO PROVIDE FREE SCHOOL LUNCHESES TO SPECIAL PURPOSE PRIVATE SCHOOLS
THAT RECEIVE STUDENTS FROM THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

March 31, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I am Steven Bailey, the executive director of the Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and the Maine School Superintendents Association in support of L.D. 776.

Currently, Maine public school students and students attending a private school approved for tuition purposes and who participate in the National School Lunch program are provided lunch free of charge. These students attend these schools from the resident town, and receive this benefit for both breakfast and lunch.

As of now, this same benefit is not enjoyed by students who attend a special purpose private school. These students also are residents of the towns that make up their resident school administrative district, and attend these schools based on a placement decision by their Maine public school district.

Should the special purpose private school, receiving public funds for the students attending their school, also participate in the federal National School Lunch Program, it only seems right that these students should also be provided the same benefit as their peers in other Maine public schools and private schools approved for tuition purposes.

This appears to us to be a clean-up bill, making right what was previously not comparable for all Maine public school students across the state.

MSSA and MSBA both support the expansion of the meals at no cost to the student to the special purpose private schools, where they too must observe the criteria for eligibility within the statute.