

Katherine Bessey
Sumner
LD 577

Testimony of Katherine Bessey, Sumner, Maine In Support of LD 577
Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and esteemed members of the Joint
Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Katherine Bessey
and I am an economic developer working with Cooperative Development Institute
and living in Sumner, ME, RSU 10.

I am hereby submitting testimony in support of LD 577 “An Act to Maximize Federal
Funding and Protect Maine’s Universal School Meals Program”. I’d like to thank
Senator Tipping for his commitment to school meals in Maine. School Meals for All
supports school aged children in Sumner and in the Western Maine school districts
significantly as high poverty, rural areas in Maine. 1 in 5 children are food insecure in
the state and School Meals reduce food insecurity and improve health and educational
outcomes for Maine kids. There is demonstrable evidence that this bill will help
further reduce childhood hunger. Decrease expensive lifelong health issues for young
Mainers, enhance school readiness, support learning, and overall empower the next
generation of Mainers.

Multiple studies have shown that School Meals for All increases participation in
school meals and reduces the stigma associated with receiving a “free lunch”, making
school meals a valued part of the school day for all students. Since the start of School
Meals for All, Maine has seen a 25% increase in school meal participation.

As a lifelong Mainer, I am asking the honorable Education and Cultural Affairs
Committee to support LD577 to help our next generation access healthy foods and
decrease childhood hunger.

Sincerely,
Katherine Bessey
Resident of Sumner, Maine