

Mariah Peric
Scarborough
LD 577

Testimony of Mariah Peric, mother of 2 students and resident of Scarborough
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 Mariah Peric. I am a parent of a kindergartener and third grader as well as a substitute school nurse for the Scarborough school district.

Today, I'm 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.

This bill is important to me because I see first hand both the need for the funding as well as the parental pride that may otherwise keep children from getting the food they need.

As a child in this same school district, I knew exactly who got reduced or free lunch because there was a very obvious system in place where students had to have their names written down when they passed through the lunch line or received different colored tickets than the rest of us. I had friends whose parents, though eligible, REFUSED to take advantage of the free meals they were offered out of embarrassment.

When free meals became available for all, that stigma of being different from the other kids was erased. All kids were given access to the same meals. Everyone became the same. All kids had food in their bellies.

If you saw how many kids ask for extra snacks or who we know go without at home, you'd be appalled. And we live in an affluent town.

If we truly care about children and education, we need to feed all of them. It's their right to have food in their stomachs so that they can learn while in our care.

We're Mainers. We took care of each other; always have, always will. And I know I'm not alone when I say that all Maine children deserve access to nutrition.

Thank you,
Mariah Peric
Scarborough