

Holly Acampora  
Windham  
LD 577

Testimony of Holly Acampora, RSU14, Windham, 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 Holly Acampora. I have a child in the RSU14 School District for Windham & Raymond and a child attending a charter school in Portland.

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 year, in 4th grade, my daughter did a learning unit on hunger in Maine. She and her fellow classmates learned what it means to be food insecure, they talked in class about what you should do if a friend doesn't have lunch, asks for food, or mentions not having enough to eat at home. The responses I read from a bunch of nine year olds was heartwarming - each and every one said they would advocate for their friends, share what they could, and talk with a trusted adult to get them help.

I am writing today because this is what I personally can do to stand up for my friends and neighbors who rely on school lunch to help feed their families, and be an example for my children. How can we, as adults, look at children in Maine and say "feeding you is too expensive and not enough of a priority for me"? School Meals for All has done so much good; reduced stigma and shame around free meals, enhances development and increases student engagement and attendance.

My family typically wouldn't qualify for free and reduced lunch, we are barely over the income threshold and already struggle to make ends meet with the rising costs of groceries and utilities. If meals were not available to my daughter at school, it would absolutely become a burden to us financially.

I am asking you as a parent, as an adult, as a voter, to support LD 577 and keep school meals free for all. Please do all you can to help the children of Maine feel confident that there is a meal waiting for them at school regardless of what their home situation is.

Holly Acampora  
RSU14 School District