



Testimony of Carly Milkowski Gorman, Resident of South Portland 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 Carly Milkowski Gorman. I am a resident of South 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.

I am a stay-at-home parent to two young children who will be entering the public school system in the next few years. Prior to having kids, I worked for close to a decade in the non-profit sector to improve food security in the Greater Portland area. I also earned my Masters in Public Health from the University of Southern Maine, where I worked for the Muskie School conducting health disparities research. Through my research and my personal and professional experience, I am acutely aware of the negative impact that food insecurity has on Maine students and families. Which was why I was so thrilled when School Meals for All became law in 2021.

Maine has the highest rate of childhood food insecurity in New England, with an estimated one in five children experiencing food insecurity. School meals are a critical source of nutritious food for many children in our state. School Meals for All has helped to reduce stigma around accessing school meals and led to a 25% increase in school meal participation across the state. In addition to relieving food insecurity, School Meals for all also reduces stress and saves time for busy families. When my own children enter the public school system, I look forward to knowing they will share healthy meals with their peers each day regardless of economic background.

In conclusion, I urge you to support School Meals for All and help make this initiative a permanent part of our schools. Thank you for your time and your commitment to Maine's children.

Carly Milkowski Gorman
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