



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
23 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, ME 04333-0023

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

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April 10, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Senate Chair
Representative Murphy, House Chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

LD 577, An Act to Maximize Federal Funding and Protect Maine's Universal School Meals Program as amended would, clarify the eligibility of a public or private school to receive reimbursement for paid meals. It also includes a condition that an eligible school must maximize federal reimbursement funds in order to receive State funding equal to the difference between the federal reimbursement for free vs. paid meals. The amendment further requires the Maine Department of Education (DOE) to annually communicate options to maximize federal funds to all participating schools. The amended bill provides State funding for the defined eligible schools.

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is a non-pricing meal service option for schools and school districts in low-income areas. This provision allows the high poverty schools and school administrative units (SAUs) to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to all enrolled students without collecting household applications, and 425 of 562 schools qualify for the CEP. Currently 114 school participate using CEP. In Maine, the number of free eligible students is determined by comparing the number of enrolled students on the Direct Certification (DC) list and comparing this to the number of enrolled students at a school. The Maine DOE appreciates this effort and intends to include similar requirements for CEP participation in future departmental legislative opportunities.

Requiring schools participating in the National School Lunch program to maximize federal reimbursement fund by applying for the Community Eligibility Provision benefits the entire Maine education community. Students continue to benefit from no cost meals. School nutrition staff benefit from reduced administrative burdens. Schools themselves will benefit from increased funding through the meal reimbursements. The Department will be available to provide additional information on LD 577 and respond to any questions during the work session.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

Jane McLucas

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Jane McLucas
Director, Child Nutrition