

## **Testimony of Roz O'Reilly, Orono High School 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 Roz O'Reilly. I am a senior at Orono High School in RSU26. Today, I'm testifying in support of LD 577 "An Act to Maximize Federal Funding and Protect Maine's Universal School Meals Program." I'd like to thank my senator, Senator Tipping, for his commitment to school meals in Maine.

I never ate school lunch until tenth grade when School Meals for All made it free for everyone. Now I eat it daily. This program hasn't just changed my routine; it's transformed our entire cafeteria culture.

Since the implementation of School Meals for All, the number of students getting school lunch isn't the only thing that's changed at Orono High School. I've seen social stigma dissipate, gender barriers fall, and the school menu flourish. Before, students who got school lunch were labeled "poor" or "lazy"—and they were mostly male students. Now? *Everyone* eats school lunch. The gender barrier has vanished. It doesn't matter who you are; you belong in our lunch line.

Our nutrition director—freed from chasing lunch money—now creates amazing dishes like Carne Asada with Cilantro Lime Rice and Hot Honey Chicken Croissant. We get to experience global cuisines right in our cafeteria.

Even our social life has changed. We now have an Instagram page called OHS Lunch where students review each day's meal. This program connects us in ways we never imagined, and I can't imagine Orono High School without that.

LD 577 is essential for keeping this program alive. By maximizing federal dollars before using state funds, it ensures sustainability. The transformation of our cafeteria—from eliminating stigma to building community through our Instagram food reviews—shows why this matters. LD 577 protects a program that has completely changed our school experience.



For these reasons, I respectfully encourage you to support L.D. 577. Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have for me.

Roz O'Reilly  
Orono High School, RSU26