

Rachel Rumson
New Gloucester
LD 577

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Rachel Lyn Rumson. I am a program manager for ReTreeUS. We are educators and food system service providers with over 90 orchards planted on public school grounds in Maine.

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.

Food is life. Students that are hungry because of the commodity food system that leaves millions of pounds of food undistributed because it is not traded. There are surpluses of foods that need to be integrated into our diets but this will take time and relearning where food comes from. I am working on that. In the meantime, the gains made in the Universal School Meals Program must be sustained.

When I was a young mother with limited resources. We had to jump through these hoops that were administrative headaches for the district and for us. We had to prove we were needy. It reinforced a sense of poverty. I am wealthier now and my child is grown and feeding himself but I was pleased to learn that the Universal School Meals as adopted.

I am not an expert in all the studies about the positive learning outcomes of fed children. I am not an expert on the economic benefit to the state in local farm engagement but I am all about the constitutional right to food and the shortening of the supply chain to access. If we can provide laptops and ipads to all the kids. We can feed them all.

Thank you.