



COFFEE BY DESIGN

PORTLAND, MAINE • EST 1994

April 10, 2025

RE: Support of LD 577

Celebrating 30 years as a Maine-owned and operated small business, Coffee By Design has always made the well-being of our staff and community the core of all we do. We are well aware that Maine has the highest rate of child food insecurity in New England. One in five kids in Maine experience food insecurity, and 40% are not eligible for school meals.

Studies show that school meals:

- Reduce childhood hunger
- Decrease childhood weight issues and obesity and improve child nutrition and wellness.
- Enhance child development and school readiness
- Support learning, attendance, and behavior
- Are the healthiest meals for many children

Multiple studies have shown that School Meals for All increases participation in school meals and reduces the stigma associated with receiving a “free lunch,” making school meals a valued part of the school day for all students.

- Since starting School Meals for All, Maine has seen a 25% increase in school meal participation.
- Over 100,000 kids eat school meals every day.
- In the school year 2023/2024, over \$29M in meals were served to Maine students.
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An added benefit of School Meals for All is the support of local farms, scratch cooking, and student engagement.

- During the 2023/2024 school year, over \$968,000 was spent on local foods by Maine schools!
- School Meals for All has freed up school nutrition professionals from chasing lunch money and paperwork, giving them more time to:
 - Develop creative menus and focus on what they’re serving to kids
 - Build relationships with local farms and source and serve more local food
 - Engage more deeply with students and be responsive to students’ dietary needs and preferences



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- Focus on providing culturally important foods that reflect the diversity of Maine's students
- Develop their culinary skills through training and professional development opportunities

Ensuring every child is fed improves health and educational outcomes for Maine children, ultimately resulting in a strong community with a bright future for us all. This builds a strong and healthy workforce that businesses like Coffee By Design rely on.

I respectfully request that you support LD 577, "An Act to Maximize Federal Funding and Protect Maine's Universal School Meals Program." Please let me know if you require any additional details. I can be reached at 207-831-7051 or by email at mal@coffeebydesign.com.

With gratitude,

Mary Allen Lindemann
Owner & Chief Creative Director
Coffee By Design
Maine Made. Woman Owned Farmer Focused