

Jennifer Pelletier  
Manchester  
LD 577

Testimony of Jennifer Pelletier, Manchester, ME, 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 Jennifer Pelletier and I am a mother of two children in the RSU 38 school system.

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.

Both of my children participate in school lunch program and often will get breakfast at school, too. They look forward each day to having a choice on what they eat at school. It creates consistency for them in school and also is helpful for us as parents to not have to pack a lunch every day before we go to work. Food scarcity is a real issue in Kennebec County. According to a child nutrition data report listed on Maine Department of Education's website, October FY 25 shows 55.95% of RSU38 kids are eligible for free and reduced lunch. Free breakfast and lunch at school may be the most consistent meals many kids in RSU38 eat every day. There is also a big impact on local Maine farmers. During the 2023/2024 school year, over \$968,000 was spent on local foods by Maine schools. Schools in Maine provide transportation and electronic funding (laptops, tablets) to all students, regardless of families' abilities to pay for those services. Food should not be any different since the benefit of these meals extends beyond the school building.

In closing, it is imperative that the committee supports this bill to ensure that the State of Maine is helping to reduce food scarcity for children in Maine and also ensure we are supporting our local Maine farmers.

I would like to thank the co-chairs and committee for their time and commitment to Maine's children and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Jennifer Pelletier  
Manchester, Maine