

Zoe Grodsky  
Portland  
LD 577

Testimony of Zoe Grodsky, Cumberland County Food Security Council  
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 Zoe Grodsky. I am the School Food Systems Manager at Cumberland County Food Security Council in South Portland, Maine.

I am 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.

In my role as School Food Systems Manager, I spend many of my days in the cafeterias in South Portland, Portland, and Westbrook schools hearing from students and staff about their experiences. I’ve seen first hand how universal meals reduce stigma for students, and allow them to get the nutrition they need to learn in their classes, connect with their classmates and teachers, play their sports, and more. At the same time, universal meals reduce burdens on foodservice staff, allowing them to focus on improving the quality of food, sourcing local ingredients, incorporating new menu items, and caring for students' wellbeing. No child should be in financial debt simply because they need to eat breakfast and lunch.

Maine is the most food insecure state in New England, with 1 in 5 kids in Maine experiencing food insecure. However, 40% of students in Maine would not be eligible for free/reduced price meals. We know that school meals reduce childhood hunger, improve childhood health, and are the healthiest meals available for many children.

I urge the committee to support this bill and make a commitment to feeding Maine students and families. I am happy to answer any questions about my experience working with school nutrition programs and the impact of School Meals for All.

Zoe Grodsky  
Cumberland County Food Security Council