

**Testimony of Anna Korsen, Full Plates Full Potential
In Support of LD 1858**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Anna Korsen and I am the Policy and Program Director with [Full Plates Full Potential](https://www.fullplates.org/), a statewide non-profit working to address childhood food insecurity in Maine by maximizing access to federally funded USDA Child Nutrition Programs like school breakfast and lunch.

Today I'm submitting testimony in support of LD 1858 "An Act to Promote Local Seafood in Schools." We'd like to thank Senator Daughtry for supporting Maine schools to take advantage of Maine's bounty of healthy local food.

Maine schools served a total of 29,757,082 meals during the 2023-2024 school year,¹ making Maine's collective cafeteria the largest restaurant in the entire state. Therefore, the purchasing power of schools is significant and can have a positive impact on the local food economy. **Over \$968,000 were spent on local foods** and directly benefited the local economy and food system during SY24.² Maine seafood is a healthy, abundant protein and there is a lot of work happening to increase fish consumption in schools. The price point for Maine seafood is often too high for a school nutrition program to be able to afford it, and this bill would provide the financial support and incentive to help schools consistently incorporate seafood into their monthly menu cycles.

Maine's existing Local Food Fund, which was designed with input from Maine school nutrition professionals and Maine Department of Education, reimburses schools \$1 for every \$3 spent on local food, including seafood. However, it does not specifically name seafood as a protein option that can be purchased through the fund, nor does it name specific entities that seafood can be purchased from. To ease administration, the Local Food Fund statute could be amended to include some of the language in this bill.

I can be available for the work session to answer any questions and discuss this idea further. Thank you for your continued commitment to feeding Maine students healthy, local food.

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¹ <https://www.maine.gov/doe/schools/nutrition/CNDataareports>

² <https://www.maine.gov/doe/schools/nutrition/programs/farmtoschool>

