



February 5, 2026

Good afternoon Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Amy Sassi and I am the Director of Government Affairs for Good Shepherd Food Bank. Please vote ought to pass on LD 2064, An Act to Expand Access to Early Childhood Nutrition by Establishing a Grant Program for Public Preschools.

According to the [latest data provided by Feeding America](#), 20.6 percent of Maine children, or 50,610, experience hunger, compared to the national average of 17 percent. The following is childhood hunger measured in each county, with the highest rate in Washington County at 27.3 percent and the lowest rate in Cumberland County at 15.8 percent. Each county except for Cumberland are higher than the national average.

<b><u>Maine County</u></b>	<b><u>Percent of children experiencing hunger</u></b>
Androscoggin County	25.6%
Aroostook County	24.3%
Cumberland County	15.8%
Franklin County	21.2%
Hancock County	19.7%
Kennebec County	22.0%
Knox County	18.1%
Lincoln County	19.5%
Oxford County	23.5%
Penobscot County	21.9%
Piscataquis County	25.0%
Sagadahoc County	19.6%
Somerset County	24.7%
Waldo County	21.5%
Washington County	27.3%
York County	18.2%

Good Shepherd Food Bank supports emergency food in 600 organizations across the state, including 130 schools. We support programs specifically for pre-k students through KVCAP at EduCare in Waterville, and at all six of Community Concepts' childcare and pre-k programs in Oxford and Franklin counties. This bill will provide grant funds for these and other pre-k programs to cover school meals for students which are not currently reimbursed through the National School Lunch Program, and a grant program for infrastructure necessary to provide breakfast, lunch, and snack.

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As the mother of a pre-k child who is provided breakfast, lunch, and snack at her school, I can tell you personally the day-to-day relief of knowing that my child and all of her classmates can access school meals regardless of parents' ability to pack or pay for food. Please pass this bill to expand this to other pre-k programs.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony,

Amy Sassi  
Good Shepherd Food Bank  
Director of Government Affairs

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