



Brunswick School Department

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

February 4, 2026

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Dr. Phil Potenziano, and I am Superintendent of Brunswick School Department from Brunswick, Maine. I am writing to express support for LD 2064: An Act to Expand Access to Early Childhood Nutrition by Establishing a Grant Program for Public Preschools.

Federal child nutrition programs were designed around meals served on a school campus or directly by a school food authority. While this model works for many traditional settings, it does not reflect the reality of Maine's mixed-delivery public pre-K system.

Community-based public pre-K partnership sites often fall outside these federal structures, even when they are publicly funded and serving children who are enrolled in public schools. As a result, children attending off-site partnership programs are excluded from universal school meals—not because of need, but because of where their classroom happens to be located.

This creates a clear inequity. Two children enrolled in the same public pre-K system can have very different access to meals based solely on geography. Families and providers should not be required to navigate federal complexity to meet a child's most basic need: food. Hunger should never be a byproduct of system design.

Federal regulations also limit flexibility for local solutions. School administrative units often cannot easily extend meal service to partnership sites due to federal constraints, and community-based providers are not adequately funded to absorb the cost of food for children in public pre-K partnerships. These are structural barriers—not local failures.

The proposed state grant program fills this critical gap. It offers a practical, state-level solution where federal programs fall short. The per-student grant allows partnership sites to provide breakfast, lunch, and snacks without relying on federal reimbursement structures that do not align with mixed-delivery models. Infrastructure grants further address real-world challenges such as refrigeration, storage, and food preparation capacity.

Importantly, this program protects and strengthens public pre-K partnerships. Without sustainable meal funding, schools may hesitate to partner with community-based programs, limiting access to public pre-K—particularly in rural areas. This grant makes partnerships more viable, more equitable,

and more sustainable, reinforcing Maine's commitment to a mixed-delivery system that meets children where they are.

This approach is targeted, flexible, and accountable. It is a grant program—not a mandate—allowing local programs to opt in, demonstrate need, and meet nutrition standards. Public dollars are used efficiently and directly benefit children.

Finally, feeding children is essential to learning. Nutrition is foundational to brain development, behavior, and school readiness. Public pre-K cannot be truly high-quality if children are hungry. This bill aligns Maine's early learning goals with children's most basic needs.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to Maine's youngest learners.

Sincerely,



Phillip J. Potenziano, Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools