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Testimony of Katie Parker for the
Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

LD 2064: An Act to Expand Access to Early Childhood Nutrition by Establishing a Grant Program for Public Preschools

February 5, 2026

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Katie Parker, and I am the COO of the Northern New England Alliance of YMCAs which represents 15 YMCAs in the state of Maine. We are submitting testimony in support LD 2064.

Collectively, Maine's YMCAs are the largest childcare provider in the state. Every day, our early childhood education programs serve thousands of children across the state. These programs provide safe, nurturing, and enriching environments that support healthy development and allow parents to participate fully in the workforce. Today, Maine's YMCAs operate 20 early learning program sites serving Maine's youngest children.

While the Y is widely recognized for our commitment to high-quality early education, you may be less familiar with the depth of our work addressing food insecurity. In 2024 alone, Maine YMCAs served more than **220,000 meals** through YMCA programs and distributed over **250,000 pounds of food** to families in communities across the state. We see firsthand how access to nutritious meals strengthens children's health, learning, and overall well-being.

The grant program proposed in LD 2064 would support this work. Several Ys across the state partner with their local school districts to offer public pre-k classrooms at Y facilities. In some cases, the local district covers the cost of meals for students in these off-site classrooms. But for many other childcare providers operating public pre-k, meal costs must be absorbed by the childcare partner. Unfortunately, meals served at off-site locations cannot be reimbursed through the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs, so the costs must be covered either by the school or the childcare provider. By helping offset the costs of providing breakfast, lunch, and snacks—and by offering additional resources for necessary infrastructure improvements—LD 2064 would expand access to nutritious meals for children in off-site public preschool programs, including those operated by YMCAs. Importantly, the bill ensures that meals meet federal nutrition standards, aligning with the high-quality practices we already strive to uphold.

For these reasons, the YMCAs of Maine strongly support LD 2064 and respectfully urge the Committee to vote "**Ought to Pass.**"

Respectfully submitted,
Katie Parker

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