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LD 947, An Act to Support the Distribution of Free Summer Lunches for Children and to Create a Program to Distribute Leftover School Food Within Communities

Good morning Chair Rafferty, Chair Brennan and respected members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Sophie Warren and I am fortunate to serve as representative for Scarborough district 124. I am here today to share with you the bill LD 947, An Act to Support the Distribution of Free Summer Lunches for Children and to Create a Program to Distribute Leftover School Food Within Communities.

The bill I ask your support of today seeks to give community partners and site who distribute free summer lunches to Maine kids the most flexibility possible within federal guidelines so that unused food within those under federal regulations does not go to waste. The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)¹ is a federally-funded, state-administered program.² What SFSP does is provide the financial support and certain regulatory guidelines with reimbursement to program operators who serve. The SFSP was established to ensure low-income children continue to receive nutritious meals during the summer months when school is not in session.

The Southern Maine Boys and Girls Club came to me with this bill, though I know it is an issue many communities across the state have to deal with and find well-meaning regulations leaves kids hungry and food wasted within the very nonprofit sites intended to address food insecurity for Maine kids.

While you will hear from one site, we know this is not an experience unique to the Boys and Girls Club. The Department of Education has reported on suggested improvements of their Summer Food Service Program and two-thirds of respondents in summer 2022 report³ commented on the need for greater flexibility to better serve their communities, including making specific mention of greater non-congregate options to provide the greatest impact in participation.

There will be site providers after me who have had direct experience with the Program and I would ask you reserve your questions for them, as they have graciously made themselves available to us today by Zoom and appreciate this opportunity to discuss their experiences with this committee today. Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), Maine Department of Education, <https://www.maine.gov/doe/schools/nutrition/programs/sfsp>.

² 2022 Summer Food Service Program Updates, Maine Department of Education, <https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doefiles/inline-files/2022%20SFSP%20Sponsor%20Updates.pdf>.

³ Maine Department of Education Child Nutrition Services Summer Food Service Program Outreach Project 2022 Expansion and Areas of Focus Recommendations Report, September 28, 2022, Maine DOE, <https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doefiles/inline-files/2022%20SFSP%20Outreach%20Report%20.pdf>.