

MAINE

**PRINCIPALS'
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*MPA is an Equal
Opportunity Organization*

TO: Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
FROM: Maine Principals' Association Legislative Committee
RE: In Opposition of LD 1002: An Act to Require a Lunch Period of at Least 30 Minutes for Student and Reduce Food Waste
DATE: March 22, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Dr. Holly Blair, and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Principals' Association – Professional Division. The MPA represents more than 800 PreK-12 principals and assistant principals of public and private schools in Maine.

The MPA Legislative Committee is in opposition of LD 1002. Maine is a local control state and the determination of how much time should be allotted for lunch times is a decision made at the local school level. The people creating the schedule do so based on the specific needs of the students and school.

On January 31, 2023, Anna Korsen from Full Plates Full Potential met with 95 building administrators from k-12 schools around the state of Maine. The feedback provided to Ms. Korsen was that 30 minutes was too long for students. There were schools who had tried 30 minutes for lunch in the past and changed it back to less than that because it did not work. Students were finished eating and discipline issues increased dramatically. In other cases, schools still provide 30 minutes for lunch and although it does not work well for the students, teacher contracts dictate a 30-minute lunch for the adults.

In the very few instances where a student did not have the opportunity to finish eating, the building administrators and staff worked with the student, family, and staff to create a plan to make sure all students had enough time to eat.

A final reason for students not finishing all the food on their plate at lunch has less to do with the amount of time provided to eat and more to do with the fact they do not like what is served. If they do not like the food hot, they are likely to not like it cold after it sits for 30 minutes.

Ultimately the amount of time that schools provide for lunch is a local control decision. Please allow the individual schools make the best decision for them. Mandating a certain time period for lunch should not be a matter of legislation.

For these reasons, we strongly urge the Committee to vote Ought Not to Pass LD 1002.