



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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*Testimony of Rep. Jan Dodge introducing*  
**LD 1002, An Act to Require a Lunch Period of at Least 30 Minutes for  
Students and Reduce Food Waste**  
*Before the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee*

Good morning Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and colleagues on the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. My name is Jan Dodge, and I represent House District #39, Belfast, Northport and Belmont. I am before you today to present **LD 1002, An Act to Require a Lunch Period of at Least 30 Minutes for Students and Reduce Food Waste**. Many Maine students are negatively affected by school lunch periods that are too short. This results in food waste and hungry students.

In the 130<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, LD 655, (Resolve 2021, Chapter 24) directed the Department of Education (DOE) to conduct a survey of School Administrative Units' (SAU) lunch periods and to review the feasibility of a 30-minute lunch for students. There were eighty-seven responses. Over 20% of elementary and high schools and 36% of middle schools have lunch periods that are only 15 to 20 minutes long. 60% of schools have a 6-10-minute wait time for the last student to be served. This results in a shortened lunch time for many students, though some respondents commented that their 25-minute lunch was sufficient.

In a number of schools, physical education and other classes are conducted in the cafeteria space. For some schools, the need for multiple lunch sessions shortens the time allotted to each lunch cohort. Students of all ages may rush through lunch in order to maximize recess or social time. Data suggests that recess before lunch creates a more successful lunch experience with more food consumed, less waste and the removal of the need to rush to get outside.

There have been some complaints from parents that their kids come home hungry due to inadequate time to eat. More time would better allow students to separate unconsumed/wrapped food from their lunch tray and place it on a "share table" for other students to consume, thus eliminating some waste.

Please visualize the daily experience of educators shepherding 25 first graders through a line up, bathroom/hand washing procedure, walking to the cafeteria, navigating the serving line, at least two dropped trays, at least two or three kids who cannot open their milk, juice or packaged food,

eating, tray disposal and the walk back to class in twenty minutes! Good times! Everyone should have this real-world experience!

This bill does not constitute a mandate with the inclusion of the phrase, “unless the governing body of the school administrative unit determines by vote after notice and public hearing that a lunch period of at least 30 minutes would be impracticable.”

Thank you for your time. I will be glad to answer your questions, and Anna Korsen of Full Plates Full Potential will be following me with more data and responses from their survey.