



## **Testimony of Anna Korsen, Full Plates Full Potential In Support of LD 1002**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Anna Korsen, Advocacy and Implementation Director with Full Plates Full Potential, a statewide non-profit working to address childhood food insecurity by providing technical and financial assistance to schools and communities to help feed kids now, while advocating for the systemic changes necessary to ensure that all Maine children have consistent access to nutritious meals. Our strategy is to maximize access to USDA Child Nutrition Programs - commonly known as school lunch, school breakfast, afterschool meals, and summer meals.

Today, I'm submitting testimony in support of LD 1002 "An Act To Require A Lunch Period of at Least 30 Minutes for Students and Reduce Food Waste." We want to thank Representative Dodge for her leadership to make sure Maine students have a healthy, productive school day by guaranteeing enough time to eat lunch and be outside.

LD 1002 directs schools to allow for a lunch period of at least 30 minutes with recess scheduled before lunch. It also encourages the use of share tables for leftover, untouched and prepackaged food. This bill includes an opt-out if a 30 minute lunch period isn't feasible.

Maine has the highest rate of childhood food insecurity in New England, with 1 in 6 kids<sup>1</sup> lacking consistent access to nutrition. For many students, school meals are the only reliable source of food and the most nutritious meals they receive<sup>2</sup>, and Maine's historic law to feed every child at school at no cost has helped to reduce the stigma around school meals resulting in more students eating. This also means longer lunch lines. Now that meals are free for all students, we must work to make sure they have enough time to actually eat them. If food is going into the trash or compost after a rushed lunch period and not into students' bellies, none of the incredible benefits of proper nutrition at school are being realized. Unfortunately, we are hearing from students and parents across the state that lunch periods are too short and students don't have enough time to eat the meals available to them. On a personal note, I have heard this from my 12 year old son nearly every day of his school career.

To gather more information about this issue, Full Plates conducted two surveys: one of students, parents, and community members; and another of school administrators. We received 101 responses from students, parents, and community members and 174 responses from school administrators. The data collected through these surveys displays the complexity of this issue.

On the one hand, 77% of students surveyed report that they don't have enough time to eat lunch at school, and 65% of those students named long lunch lines as the main issue. 83% of parents and guardians and 76% of other school and community members surveyed say that students do not have enough time to eat.

On the other hand, school administrators report facing many logistical barriers like limited staffing and multi-use spaces that make longer lunch periods challenging. They also express concern that behavior issues in the cafeteria are likely to increase with longer lunch periods, and many have observed behavior issues during the last 5-10 minutes of lunch.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2020/child/maine>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/13/health/healthy-school-food-nutrition-wellness/index.html>



When asked what support they would need to implement a 30 minute lunch period, the top two supports identified were additional staffing and a longer school day. 39 school administrators surveyed report that they currently have 30 minute lunch periods at their schools.

Study after study has shown that longer lunch periods combined with recess before lunch result in increased consumption of lunch with greater consumption of nutritious foods<sup>3,4,5</sup>, improved student behavior in the cafeteria and the classroom<sup>6,7</sup> and decreased food waste<sup>8</sup>.

Like other bills brought before this committee to ensure recess time for middle school students and a later start time for high school students, this bill is an important part of the broader conversation happening in the state about how we can ensure that the school day supports happy, healthy, and prepared students. Schools need support to implement these research-driven solutions. Furthermore, households across our state are struggling with rising costs and the end of covid-era assistance like extra SNAP dollars leading to increased food insecurity. School meals are more important than ever, and we ask this committee to make sure students are getting the nutrition they need to succeed at school by passing LD 1002. Thank you for your time and consideration, I'm happy to answer any questions you have.

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<sup>3</sup> Cohen, J. F. W., Jahn, J. L., Richardson, S., Cluggish, S. A., Parker, E., & Rimm, E. B. (2016). Amount of time to eat lunch is associated with children's selection and consumption of school meal entrée, fruits, vegetables, and milk. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, 116(1), 123–128. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2015.07.019>

<sup>4</sup> Hildebrand, PhD, RD, SNS, LD, D., Millburg Ely, MS, RD, LD, CNSC, C., Betts, PhD, RD, N. M., & Gates, PhD, RD, FAND, G. E. (2018). Time To Eat School Lunch Affects Elementary Students' Nutrient Consumption. *Journal of Child Nutrition and Management*, 42(2). <https://doi.org/https://schoolnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Fall2018-Time-To-Eat-Lunch.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Price, J., & Just, D. R. (2015). Lunch, recess and nutrition: responding to time incentives in the cafeteria. *Preventive Medicine*, 71, 27–30. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2014.11.016>

<sup>6</sup> *Recess Before Lunch Can Mean Happier, Healthier Kids*. (n.d.). Education World. Retrieved March 20, 2023, from [https://www.educationworld.com/a\\_admin/admin/admin389.shtml](https://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin389.shtml)

<sup>7</sup> *Study: Recess before lunch could benefit Indiana students*. (2019, September 19). Ball State University. Retrieved March 20, 2023, from <https://www.bsu.edu/news/press-center/archives/2019/9/recess-before-lunch-could-benefit-indiana-students>

<sup>8</sup> Strohbehn, C. H., Strohbehn, G. W., Lanningham-Foster, L., Litchfield, R. E., & Scheidel, C. (2016). Impacts of scheduling recess before lunch in elementary schools: A case study approach of plate waste and perceived behaviors. *The Journal of Child Nutrition & Management*, 40(1). [http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/aeshm\\_pubs/92](http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/aeshm_pubs/92)