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# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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*Testimony of Representative Suzanne Salisbury in support of*  
**LD 1183, An Act to Establish the School Meal Equipment and Program Improvement Fund**  
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs*

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Sue Salisbury. I represent House District 128, which is part of the town of Westbrook. I am here today to introduce LD 1183, An Act to Establish the School Meal Equipment and Program Improvement Fund.

School nutrition programs across our state are tasked with the important job of feeding Maine's students and often lack the proper equipment to do so. Many Maine schools are ill-equipped to prepare and serve nutritious meals as they are challenged with outdated, broken and missing equipment like ovens, stovetops, refrigerators, freezers and more. Additionally, Maine school nutrition professionals report an increase in students with medically diagnosed food allergies, and schools often lack adequate funding to purchase food that is safe for those students to consume. LD 1183 would establish a much-needed fund to support the purchases of large kitchen and cafeteria equipment as well as food allergy friendly items that cost more than other ingredients.

In the time since I first put this title in, I have come to understand that the Department of Education actually has some funding left over from a similar effort that was passed several years ago. Others who come after me can provide more information about that funding, why it was passed, and why a portion of the funds are unspent. For my part, I will simply recommend that you amend this bill to utilize the existing unspent funds from the Alternative Breakfast Delivery Service Program within the Department of Education established in 2019 Public Law Chapter 480 (129<sup>th</sup> Legislature, LD 701). That funding was specifically intended for equipment needed to operate school breakfast, but at this point, what schools really need is a more flexible pot of funding that can support the kitchen equipment, cafeteria equipment and specialized products that are needed for all meal programs, not just breakfast. Thankfully, we can utilize existing resources to help meet this need.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to try and answer any questions you may have.