

To the Honorable members of the Committee, distinguished guests, and all other attendees:

Good afternoon,

My name is Benjamin Rivers and I am a fifth grade student at Katahdin Elementary School in Staceyville, Maine. I am currently participating in the All About Food Program.

I am here today to offer my testimony in support of Bill LD 1682 so that other students might have the opportunity to enjoy the program like I do.

In the program we learn about Gardening, Cooking and Nutrition. The program also provides other opportunities, such as public speaking.

**Gardening** is a very important part of our state's history, culture, and economy. Learning about gardening and growing my own food has taught me how to focus, follow instructions, observe change, discuss issues, and make decisions. Locally grown food is fresher, tastes better, and is more nutritious. Buying locally helps support Maine's farmers and Maine's families. I enjoy telling my parents about all the things I have learned about gardening in the program and growing our own garden at home.

The second element of the program is **Cooking**. Poorly cooked food can taste bad, lead to waste, or even be less healthy, and overcooked food loses nutrition.

Learning how to cook things properly could lead to future employment in the food service or tourism industry, which are both important parts of our economy. Cooks work at home, in schools, hospitals, restaurants, hotels, lodges, and sporting camps all over Maine.

Learning how to cook provides a way to connect with others socially in a hands-on way that is fun. It is creative and essential.

The third and final element is **Nutrition**. I have learned that nutrition is what helps to keep us healthy. Nutrition comes from a balanced diet and good foods. Health problems later in life are sometimes caused by poor nutrition and bad diets as children. Understanding nutrition may help us solve or avoid health problems in the future by learning what a good choice looks like now.

Statistics show that you will live a longer and have a more productive life; physically, mentally, and financially, and have more energy, more focus, and greater discipline if you have balanced meals and get proper nutrition.

In conclusion, All About Food starts a lot of conversations at home from lessons learned at school or questions I think about. One of the things I like best about it is that the lessons are interactive, hands on, and fun which helps me understand. I appreciate everything our teacher does for us, and the knowledge shared.

Thank you for listening to my comments and for your time.

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Pending your questions this concludes my testimony.

Benjamin Franklin Rivers  
Fifth Grade Student  
Katahdin Elementary School