



Testimony of Laura Cordes

In Support of

LD 776 An Act to Provide Free School Lunches to Special Purpose Private Schools That Receive Students from the Public School System

Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

March 31, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of *LD 776 An Act to Provide Free School Lunches to Special Purpose Private Schools That Receive Students from the Public School System*.

My name is Laura Cordes, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Maine Association for Community Service Providers (MACSP). MACSP represents nearly 100 agencies that provide person-centered educational, vocational, residential, and community-based supports to children and adults across Maine with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or brain injuries—helping them live full and meaningful lives in their communities.

Several of our member agencies operate K-12 Special Purpose Private Schools, which serve hundreds of students with disabilities who have been referred by their local school districts.

I applaud Representative O'Halloran for sponsoring this bill, which addresses a clear inequity in Maine's school food service laws. LD 776 ensures that Special Purpose Private Schools enrolling publicly funded students and participating in the National School Lunch Program receive state funding to cover meal costs—just as their public and private school counterparts do.

Additionally, this bill clarifies and improves consistency in the application of the law for Special Purpose Private Schools, some of which are already participating in the program and were surprised to learn that this legislation was necessary.

We strongly urge your support of LD 776 to ensure that all publicly funded students—regardless of the educational setting—have equal access to nutritious meals.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions and would be happy to provide additional information for the work session.

Laura Cordes
Executive Director