

# Nutrition Department

Lisbon School Department

Allison Leavitt  
Director of Nutrition  
[aleavitt@lisbonschoolsme.org](mailto:aleavitt@lisbonschoolsme.org)

19 Gartley Street  
Lisbon, ME, 04250  
207-353-3044

---

Thursday, April 10, 2025

**Testimony of Allison Leavitt, Nutrition Director for the Lisbon School Department  
and the President of Maine School Nutrition Association, Harpswell  
In Support of LD 577**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Allison Leavitt. I am the Nutrition Director for the Lisbon School Department and the current President of Maine School Nutrition Association.

Today, I'm submitting testimony in support of LD 577 "An Act to Maximize Federal Funding and Protect Maine's Universal School Meals Program". I'd like to thank Senator Tipping for his commitment to school meals in Maine.

\$41,795. That is the maximum amount of money a family of 4 can make in order to qualify for free meals according to federal USDA income guidelines. This amount is higher in Hawaii and Alaska, however it is the same amount a family in Maine and a family in Alabama can make in order to be eligible for free school meals.

We know the cost of living in Maine is higher than it is in many other states. The average monthly rent in Maine is \$1630. The average monthly grocery bill for a family of 4 in Maine is \$1048. The average cost for a family of 4 for health insurance in Maine is \$1500. If you add those three numbers together, we are already over expended by \$695. These figures do not include other regular monthly expenses such as utilities, gas for your vehicle, other insurances etc.

In 2021 Maine was the first in the Nation to amend its constitution to include "the right to food amendment". Initially, this bill was called "The right to Food and the Right to Food Sovereignty and Freedom from Hunger." The Right to Freedom from Hunger... It is in our states constitution. Why would we not support this freedom in the very place where our students spend the majority of their day? Why would we not support feeding our students healthy, nutritious, local foods at no cost to their family? We don't ask families to pay for bussing. We don't ask families to pay for books and sports uniforms. Why

# Nutrition Department

## Lisbon School Department

Allison Leavitt  
Director of Nutrition  
[aleavitt@lisbonschoolsme.org](mailto:aleavitt@lisbonschoolsme.org)

19 Gartley Street  
Lisbon, ME, 04250  
207-353-3044

---

should a basic human right be something we are asking our already maxed out families to pay for?

We all know that children spend the majority of their time in school, and it is also proven that meals consumed at school are often the healthiest they will eat and sometimes the only meals they will eat.

Prior to the implementation of School Meals for All in Maine, Nutrition Directors spent an unthinkable amount of time processing paperwork, chasing meal payments, and many other administrative tasks that took away from the development and wellbeing of our programs.

Since the implementation of SM4A, I'm incredibly proud of the work my colleagues throughout the state have done, vastly improving the quality of meals through farm to school initiatives and going "back" to more scratch cooking, veering away from processed items. We know that School Meals for All in Maine has improved our participation, thus increasing the amount of healthy foods the future of Maine is consuming.

Not only did School Meals for all expand meal access to students, it removed the stigma felt on a daily basis by students.

In Maine, our motto is Dirigo. I Lead. Maine lead the nation to be one of the first states to offer universal meals for our students. Please don't send us backwards. Please invest in the students of Maine. Please stand by the motto of the state of Maine and continue to lead.

Allison Leavitt  
President Maine School Nutrition Association  
Nutrition Director for the Lisbon School Department