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President of the Senate

**THE MAINE SENATE**  
**132nd Legislature**

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**Testimony in Support of**  
**LD 1858, “An Act to Promote Local Seafood in Schools”**  
**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs**  
**May 8, 2025**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Mattie Daughtry. I serve as President of the Maine Senate and proudly represent Senate District 23, which includes Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island, and part of Yarmouth.

I am honored to introduce LD 1858, “An Act to Promote Local Seafood in Schools.” This bill is about supporting two things that are core to Maine’s identity: our fisheries and our kids. LD 1858 establishes the Local Seafood Fund, a targeted investment that helps school districts purchase seafood directly from Maine fishermen, aquaculture farmers, local processors, and food hubs. It provides matching funds to school districts that choose to put Maine seafood on the lunch tray—making it more affordable to serve high-quality, local products that support our economy and nourish our students.

We are fortunate in Maine to have a robust seafood industry and a deep tradition of working waterfronts. Yet too often, the fresh, nutritious seafood that lands on our docks doesn’t end up on the plates of Maine students. This bill aims to change that. LD 1858 not only helps schools afford local seafood—it also helps them make the most of it by supporting training for food service staff, encouraging collaboration among school districts, and offering guidance on nutrition and sourcing.

Importantly, this bill is also an investment in the next generation of seafood consumers. By introducing Maine students to local seafood early and often, we help them develop a lifelong appreciation for it—building healthy eating habits and supporting the long-term vitality of our seafood economy.

It’s a win-win. Our fishermen and aquaculture producers gain access to new markets right here at home. Our students get delicious, healthy meals. And our schools receive support to implement these changes in a thoughtful, sustainable way.

The Legislature has passed incredible legislation over the last five years to make sure our schools are supported with local foods and our local farmers and fishermen have a strong market close to home. We passed LD 636 in 2021 to create the Local Produce Fund, helping schools purchase produce and other minimally processed foods from local farmers and producers. The arrangement benefits our local farmers, our schools, our planet and our students, who are getting healthy, nutritious food grown close to home. In 2023, Senator Reny worked to make sure value-added products could be included through LD 921 to allow the Local Foods Fund for schools to be able to incorporate processed and value-added Maine food products, recognizing that farmers and foragers

make their living by diversifying and creating value-added products. This legislation would widen our nets, so to speak, to make sure nutritious local foods from our local waters are also part of Maine school meals.

I do recognize that as this bill moves forward, there may be some drafting clarifications around definitions, program implementation, or alignment with existing procurement practices to consider. I welcome the Committee's input and collaboration to strengthen the bill while maintaining its core purpose: supporting Maine's seafood economy and improving school nutrition.

Thank you for your consideration of LD 1858, and I urge the Committee to join me in supporting this effort to bring more Maine seafood into our schools.