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*Testimony of Kelly Noonan Murphy in support of*  
**LD 2064, An Act to Expand Access to Early Childhood Nutrition by**  
**Establishing a Grant Program for Public Preschools**  
*Before the Joint Standing Committee of Education and Cultural Affairs*

Senator Raferty and fellow members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Kelly Murphy, and I represent District 125, which includes part of Scarborough. Today, I am proud to support **LD 2064, An Act to Expand Access to Early Childhood Nutrition by Establishing a Grant Program for Public Preschools**.

Before serving in the Legislature, I spent years working as a preschool teacher, and in those classrooms, you see very quickly how hunger affects children. A hungry four-year-old doesn't have the language to explain what's wrong. They show it through behavior, fatigue, frustration, or withdrawal. I've seen children struggle to participate in circle time, have trouble regulating their emotions, or even disengage from learning simply because they hadn't eaten enough that day. No amount of good curriculum can overcome an empty stomach.

LD 2064 recognizes that early childhood nutrition is not a side issue, it is foundational to learning, development, and well-being. By establishing a grant program that allows public preschools to provide meals and snacks at no cost, this bill removes a barrier that too many families and educators face. It ensures that children can focus on learning, socializing, and growing, rather than on whether they are hungry.

This bill also reflects the realities of public preschool programs across Maine. As a teacher, I saw how limited budgets and staffing made it difficult to consistently provide food, even when educators knew it was needed.

To be clear, we would never let a child go hungry during the school day. My coworkers and I routinely brought extra food into the classroom and shared it with the children. Though early childhood educators are some of the lowest-paid workers in the state, I'm confident this scenario plays out in preschools and childcare centers every day across Maine.

A flexible grant program allows schools to meet children's needs in ways that make sense locally, without adding unnecessary administrative burden or stigma for families.

As an educator, I also know that supporting children early pays off later. When children come to school well-nourished and ready to learn, it sets them on a stronger path academically and socially. This is an investment that benefits families, schools, and communities across our state.

LD 2064 reflects Maine values: taking care of kids, supporting working families, and giving every child a fair start. For those reasons, I urge the committee to vote “Ought to Pass.”

Thank you for your time and consideration.