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*Testimony of Rep. Sue Salisbury 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 on Education and Cultural Affairs*

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, I am Sue Salisbury, and I represent House District 128, which includes part of Westbrook. I am here today to testify in support of **LD 2064, An Act to Expand Access to Early Childhood Nutrition by Establishing a Grant Program for Public Preschools**.

LD 2064 is an essential next step in ensuring children in Maine are well-fed and properly developing. Information from the School Nutrition Association says that “School nutrition services are a vital part of the foundation on which a child flourishes. Schools provide meals that meet the federal nutrition standards for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs and can accommodate the health and nutrition needs of all students.”<sup>1</sup> This information, combined with the fact that students who attend preschool achieve greater success throughout their school careers, supports the case for preschool nutrition.<sup>2</sup>

The collaboration among the Maine Children’s Cabinet Early Childhood Advisory Council, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Child and Family Service and the Department of Education will ensure that off-site preschool programs can apply for grants to provide breakfast, lunch and snacks to students.

As the director of a local food pantry, I see firsthand how real food insecurity is in many of our communities. The free breakfast and lunch program that the Legislature approved in 2021 has been a game changer for so many students and families. In the Westbrook community, when school is not in session, whether because of weather or school breaks, we arrange for families to

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<sup>1</sup> <https://schoolnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/School-Nutrition-and-the-Whole-Child-Approach-to-Education1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/press-release/what-does-research-really-say-about-preschool-effectiveness>

still receive food because we recognize how vital this service is to reducing hunger in our city. Extending this funding to preschool children is the next logical step in ensuring that all students have what they need to succeed and reducing the number of children facing food insecurity.

The State of Maine knows the benefits of supporting its children, and this grant program is just another example of how we can do that. I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" to reduce hunger amongst one of our most vulnerable populations.

Thank you for your time and consideration.