

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

L.D. 655

AN ACT TO REQUIRE AT LEAST A 30-MINUTE LUNCH PERIOD FOR STUDENTS

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. I am Steven Bailey, executive director of Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association in opposition to L.D. 655.

School Boards and Superintendents oppose this bill because it attempts to mandate what is and has to be a local decision. Lunch periods are scheduled based on the number of students we have to serve; the space available to seat them; and, the classes and activities that have to occur on a given day. Those factors will vary district by district.

We understand there is concern in some areas about lunch periods that are too short. School Boards and administrators hear those concerns and mitigate them when possible. The reality is there literally is not enough time in the school day to do all we want to do and mandates add to that time pressure.

School Boards, in their policy making role, working with their superintendents juggle the many demands on students and staff and put forward the best educational program possible. The scheduling of that program cannot be responsive to local needs if it is mandated by the state.

We also want to underscore that in discussions with our members about this bill, it is clear that accommodations are made for students who eat slowly or are unavoidably late for lunch. There are caring people on the ground looking out for children.