

March 22, 2021

Sen. Matthea Daughtry
Rep. Michael Brennan
Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Cross Building, Rm. 207
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Sen. Daughtry, Rep. Brennan, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

I regret that I am unable to attend the hearing for LD 655 and greatly appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of An Act To Require at Least a 30-minute Lunch Period for Students. While there are many dimensions and potential impacts of this bill, I would like to comment on one particular aspect of this proposed legislation related to issues of waste.

As a member of the Materials Management Research Group at the University of Maine's Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions I have conducted research on food waste in Maine's K-12 school system.¹ Research shows that **ensuring students have enough time to eat their lunch is a critical step in reducing school food waste.**²

School food waste is a serious issue in Maine.¹ Globally, it is estimated that one third of food intended for consumption is wasted.³ Maine has the highest rate of food insecurity in New England, a problem that is particularly acute for children.⁴ Providing at least 30 minutes for students to consume their lunch is a small step we can take to ensure that children can benefit from the food available to them through school nutrition programs.

Our kids should be eating the food we serve in schools. Providing a minimum of thirty minutes for lunch can help ensure that the food goes into children's mouths rather than trash cans.

Kind regards,

Brienne Berry, PhD Candidate, Department of Anthropology

These comments reflect my views and expertise and do not speak on behalf of the university.

¹ Berry, Brienne, and Ann Acheson. 2017. "Sharing Isn't Easy: Food Waste and Food Redistribution in Maine K-12 Schools." *Maine Policy Review* 26 (1): 47-58.

² Leib, Emily Broad, Christina Rice, Ona Balkus, and Jill Mahoney. 2016. "Keeping Food Out of the Landfill: Policy Ideas for States and Localities." Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic. http://www.chlpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Food-Waste-Toolkit_Oct-2016_smaller.pdf.

³ Buzby, Jean C., Hodan F. Wells, and Jeffrey Hyman. 2014. "The Estimated Amount, Value, and Calories of Postharvest Food Losses at the Retail and Consumer Levels in the United States." EIB-121. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

⁴ Coleman-Jensen, Alisha, Matthew P. Rabbitt, Christian A. Gregory, and Anita Singh. 2020. "Household Food Security in the United States in 2019." ERR-275. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.