



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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March 24, 2021

### *Testimony of Rep. Jan Dodge presenting*

### **LD 655, An Act To Require at Least a 30-minute Lunch Period for Students Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs**

Good morning Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and esteemed colleagues of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. I am Representative Jan Dodge of House District 97 which includes Belfast, Northport and Waldo. I am here to present **LD 655, An Act To Require at Least a 30-minute Lunch Period for Students.**

Federal regulations encourage schools “to provide sufficient lunch periods that are long enough to give all students adequate time to be served and eat their lunches.” CDC research suggests, and the School Nutrition Association agrees, that twenty minutes of seat time improves student nutrition and reduces waste.

There will always be middle school students who skip or rush through eating to maximize time outside to burn off energy and high school kids who just want to get to the gym to shoot baskets or hang with friends. This bill would provide time for the student at the end of the serving line who barely has time to eat, or the hungry kid who might get leftovers as seconds after everyone else is served.

The bill includes an opt out by a school board vote. Acknowledging that various age groups view lunch time differently and have different needs is important. With COVID restrictions reduced, there are definite reasons to celebrate and encourage post lunch physical activity, as well as a few minutes to foster social emotional connections!

The strongest evidence for 30-minute lunch periods may be found in the common K-3 lunch experience. Until you have managed a class of 20 kids through line up, restroom break and wash up, cafeteria travel time, serving line “he poked me” scuffles, a spilled lunch tray or three, another line up, back to the classroom travel time, coat zipping, snow boot assistance and mitten retrieval, all in under thirty minutes, I assure you, you have not lived a complete life experience!!! Good times!!

Please pass LD 655 to promote good nutrition, reduce food waste and allow physical activity and social/emotional time that aids in our students’ overall improved wellbeing!

Thank you! I will try to answer any questions you may have.