



**Testimony of Anna Korsen, Full Plates Full Potential  
In Support of LD 655**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Anna Korsen, I'm the Director of Advocacy with Full Plates Full Potential. Today, I'm submitting testimony in support of LD 655. I want to thank Representative Dodge and all the bill co-sponsors for your commitment to addressing childhood hunger in Maine.

Full Plates Full Potential is a statewide nonprofit organization on a mission to end childhood insecurity in Maine. We do our work by breaking down barriers to food access and increasing participation in school meal programs. Part of that work is to ensure that Maine students have enough time to eat.

Maine currently advises school districts to allocate at least 20 minutes of a student's day for lunch. However, this includes the time it takes to walk to the cafeteria, wait in line, sit down, and eat. Research shows that a student at the end of the cafeteria line has 2-3 minutes to eat, creating a stressful and rushed dining experience and resulting in a child that will have trouble participating in class. Diona Ndagano, a senior at Portland High School, shared that "Lunch is important because it gives me energy to stay awake and concentrate for the rest of the classes, but it makes me tired when I eat it so fast because I don't have enough time to stand on the line and eat comfortably." Additionally, Maine cafeterias have an increased focus on providing healthy choices to students, but healthier choices like raw vegetables take longer to eat. Short lunch periods often result in increased food waste, as less food ends up in students' bellies and more is thrown away. According to the USDA, extending school lunch periods from 20 to 30 minutes can reduce cafeteria food waste by one third.

We understand that school days are already packed, and that the combination of tight schedules and strict learning standards can make extending a lunch period seem impossible. However, some Maine schools have already figured out how to fit a 30 minute lunch period into their day, and we should make this best practice a reality for all students across our state by putting it into statute. Additionally, Covid-19 has turned everything on its head, and now is the time to make big changes that will ensure Maine students, Maine's future, have what they need to succeed.

In closing, I urge the committee to support LD 655. Thank you for your time and commitment to Maine's children. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Anna Korsen  
Director of Advocacy, Full Plates Full Potential