

Dear Senator Rafferty,

My name is Ryan Parker and I am writing not only to share my support for LD 636, but also to offer my services, such as they are, if you have any questions during your work session. I thank you for your dedication to Maine's schools, school staff, and the children they serve.

Through my work professionally as the Maine Associate Director of Programs for FoodCorps, I work with a number of schools throughout Maine, specifically working to increase the quality of ingredients in school meals, increase access to, and participation in school meal programs, and increase the ability of Maine schools to utilize locally produced Maine foods (as a long-time farmer this is very close to my heart). As a school board member in my own community who sits on the budget, and education committees, I also get to see behind the scenes, and have a lot of conversations with my district administration and staff about the challenges of providing locally sourced, scratch cooked, healthy meals to our state's students.

The Local Procurement Fund was originally set up to overcome many of these challenges, and, in some regards, it has been successful. But, as you

heard in testimony from school nutrition professionals and others engaged in this work, the current format of the fund is too limiting to allow full access.

I'm also a member of the Maine Farm to School Network Leadership Council. As a network, we worked diligently over the course of several months to gather input from dining services directors, and distributors who service their schools, to understand the limitations of the local procurement fund. This bill is designed to overcome those limitations. As there is no additional fiscal note associated with the changes to the program, and these changes are informed by the constituents who best understand the complex world of school nutrition, I urge you to support LD 636.

Again, if you have any questions during your work session, or at any time, I am happy to engage in further discussion or provide additional information. I will share this same letter with your colleagues on the Committee, and have included Mr. Baker.

Thank you for all you do for Maine and your communities.