



## Testimony of Kelly A. Roberts, Let's Go! In Support of LD 636

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Kelly A. Roberts. I am a resident of Biddeford and a Program Coordinator with Let's Go! serving York County.

Today, I'm submitting testimony in support of LD 636. I want to thank the bill sponsors for your commitment to addressing childhood hunger in Maine.

Let's Go! in York county works closely with school nutrition directors in a monthly workgroup collaboration to increase participation in school meals, the perception of school meals, and continue to improve the nutritional quality of school meals. Using local foods has been a priority for many of the school nutrition directors in York County, and I think the improvements brought upon by this bill would be beneficial in many ways.

When locally grown food is available and advertised on the school lunch menu, the perception of school meals is improved, and participation is increased. As a parent myself, I am always happy to see nutritious, locally grown foods being offered to my children at school; Many parents feel the same way.

In addition, many of our school nutrition directors have formed excellent relationships with local farms through purchasing. These relationships have enabled schools to be on the receiving end of donated crops from time to time, and some farms have even dedicated crop zones just for growing for the schools.

As mentioned in a workgroup meeting, one director was able to purchase and offer locally-raised meat on the menu for one day, which was not easy to fit into the budget. Participation was increased and the families appreciated the quality of the meal being served, and would like to see more meals like this on the menu. This bill would make it possible to offer more locally-raised meat and dairy.

In addition to providing our students with high quality meals, our local farms will get more support through business, and increased recognition as the farms are often mentioned on the menus or on the school nutrition social media pages.

I would like to see the committee support LD 636 to Encourage the Purchase of Local Foods for Public Schools. This bill will help improve the nutritional quality of school meals, improve the perception of school meals, and increase participation to feed more children in Maine.

Thank you Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs for your time and commitment to Maine's children. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Kelly A. Roberts  
Program Coordinator, Let's Go!