

State of Maine  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Testimony of Walter Beesley, State Director, Child Nutrition

Support L.D. 961

An Act To Provide Equity in Access to Applications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs.

Sponsored by: Representative Rebecca Millett

Co-Sponsored by Senators Libby, Pouliot, Rafferty and Representatives Pebworth, Salisbury, Talbot Ross, and Zager.

Date: Monday April 26, 2021

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Walter Beesley and I am here today representing the Department of Education speaking in support of L.D. 961, An Act to Provide Equity in Access to Applications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program.

The proposed bill directs the Department to make available an online meal benefit application to public schools. The amendment to the bill requires local school administrative units (SAU) to accept the data submitted by families through an online application. The Department has made an online application available to schools, as directed by PL 2019 Ch. 480. It is available in multiple languages, as required by the FNS Civil Rights monitoring office. The Department's Office of Child Nutrition has been providing ongoing trainings to SAU staff members and families to support the usage of the online application. There are currently 70 districts utilizing the Department's online system. In an effort to better support students and their families, Child Nutrition staff members are currently leading a statewide effort to educate families regarding the community and statewide benefits associated with accurately completing the meal benefit application for their children.

For these reasons, the Department of Education is in support of L.D. 961, An Act to Provide Equity in Access to Applications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. I am happy to answer any questions the Committee may have at this time, and I will be available for the work session.