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## Maine Community Action Partnership Supports LD 961 An Act To Provide Equity in Access to Applications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program

April 26, 2021

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, ladies and gentlemen of the Joint Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, I am Megan Hannan, Executive Director of Maine Community Action Partnership and we support LD 961 An Act To Provide Equity in Access to Applications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program.

For more than 50 years, Community Action has served as a dynamic and community-based force in addressing the causes and conditions of poverty throughout Maine and the country. Our ten Community Action Agencies deliver programs and services for people with low- and moderate income, including the Home Energy Assistance Program, or HEAP; workforce development; the current rental relief program; Head Start and childcare; and more. Equity – in health, education and economic opportunity; based on race, ethnicity or socio-economic status – is a keystone of our Mission and work. We are focused on ending the systems and policies that make being poor a full-time job.

We serve the most vulnerable communities in Maine, and our goal is to make it as easy as possible for families to apply for and receive all of the programs and services for which they qualify. An overarching goal is to create a user friendly “no wrong door” approach to all of those programs and services, but in the meantime, every step making it easier is a step we support. Every day, we help families apply for SNAP, TANF, HEAP, etc. and feed our Head Start children two meals and two snacks a day. During the past year while we had to close our childcare programs, we fed those families by creating pick-up sites or going to homes to deliver food.

We know food is medicine; food is health; and well-, appropriately fed children do better in school. This bill proposes a relatively easy fix for hard working, busy families: a one-stop home to apply for free- or reduced cost lunches. I understand that about 70 schools are already using a program like this and it works well.

Families still have the option to apply on paper, this does not change that. English Language Learning families should have options to apply in the language they read and are most comfortable; I suggest the Department do more than “endeavor to provide the Internet-based application in various languages reflecting the student population of public schools in the State” and ensure it is so. We have the capacity to translate any documents, and I am sure this is a requirement of any national company providing this type of service.

I am happy to answer any questions that I can, now or in the work session.

Respectfully Submitted,

[Megan Hannan](#)