

**Testimony of Sandra MacArthur, Superintendent of MSAD 13/RSU 83
In Support of LD 1679**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Sandra MacArthur I am a resident of Madison and the Superintendent of MSAD 13 serving Bingham and Moscow. Today, I'm submitting testimony in support of LD 1679. I want to thank the bill sponsors for their commitment to addressing childhood hunger in Maine.

MSAD 13 is a small rural district that serves 180 PreK-12 students in Somerset County. Since, March 2020 when all students became eligible for free breakfast and lunch our student participation increased drastically. One of our students that lives the furthest from our schools stood out in her yard every day, rain or shine waiting for the bus to deliver her breakfast and lunch. The drivers still comment that this student made it all worthwhile. She was so excited and thankful to see the drivers and receive the meals. Without the free meals for all this student would not have been eligible for these meals.

Research demonstrates that school feeding programs reduce childhood hunger as well as improves child nutrition and wellness. Many children in Maine do not get a fair chance to succeed in life because of where they grow up. In Maine there are stark disparities among the experiences and opportunities for children depending on where they live. Data from Save the Children's [*2021 U.S. Complement to the Global Childhood Report*](#) shows that children who are poor and live in rural areas are more likely to go hungry. LD1679 will be a strong viable step towards addressing one of the major disparities that negatively impacts rural poor children throughout our state.

Sadly the U.S. continues to lag behind most peer countries in meeting the needs of children and families. Several recent reports examine the multiple hardships, including hunger, that are making it more difficult for children to reach their full potential. Students that experience hunger on a regular basis often have low school attendance and more school behavior issues. Returning to our normal school feeding programs will not be enough for these children. A hungry child can not focus on learning. Maine has an opportunity to be a leader in solving this issue.

Please take this opportunity to improve educational outcomes for our students by providing them with nutritious and necessary meals by supporting LD1679. Thank you Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs for taking the time to read this testimony. If I can be of any assistance in answering your questions please feel free to contact me.

Sandra MacArthur, Superintendent MSAD 13