

Amy Magnuson  
Falmouth

Testimony of Amy Magnuson 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 Amy Magnuson. I am a resident of Falmouth and work in the school system and have 4 children that are currently (or soon to be) in the schools.

Today, I'm submitting testimony in support of LD 1679. I want to thank the bill sponsors for your commitment to addressing childhood hunger in Maine.

We live in Falmouth and really appreciate the meals that we have been given by the Falmouth Schools. We are not a family that would qualify for the traditional free and reduced lunch plans that schools offer; however, we are not a family that would be considered well off either. This year, our school aged children have been given breakfast and lunch everyday (including the virtual Wednesday) and we have been given meal boxes for vacation weeks. This has been a tremendous help for our family dynamic as it has taken a lot of stress off of our plates in a year where, as we are both teachers, the stressors have been many. Our boys have been exposed to so many new and healthy foods that prior to this year we could not justify spending money on the off chance they didn't like it. With two additional children in the home that are not yet school-aged, the prospect of our other children having this same opportunity is amazing. For us, this help goes beyond avoiding the hassle of packing a school lunch on a jam-packed day where time is very limited. Previously we have had to limit our children to a couple school lunches a month (despite their desire to want more) because it simply isn't financially feasible. This year we have not had to limit their access to school lunches; in addition, we have been able to free up money that would normally be spent on lunches (whether hot or bagged) to pay for other expenses that are incurred with four children (like medical and dental expenses) There has been less arguing in our home over choices they are making about their lunch choices; we know that Martha and her team prepare the highest quality school lunches with lots of healthy choices. The amount of stress this program saved us from experiencing in an already really stressful time is immeasurable. With two additional children adding into the system soon, this will only continue to reduce financial worries. Knowing we have healthy options for our children during a period in their lives where they are learning how to make lifelong healthy choices is essential. Imagine growing up being presented with lots of healthy options? The future for those children is vastly improved than those children who are making their own unhealthier choices. My children are being presented with new flavors (some of which my very picky 5th grader has tried and ended up really enjoying!) and a wide variety of fruits and vegetables that they may not choose willingly, but when placed in front of them they are happily eating. Though we try very hard to put those choices in front of them at home, often there is resistance. We know through experience when those options are given at school, children are much more willing to try these foods (and make healthier choices). We see the same thing happen when our children eat at other people's houses; foods they refuse to try at home they willingly try outside the home. By allowing this bill to pass, you are allowing children like ours to continue to be exposed to healthy options without us having to say we cannot afford the school lunch program. The continuation of this program would be a huge benefit for our family. Knowing that they would have healthy options each day would help ensure their good health in the future and reduce financial and emotional stress on our family and many other families who fall between the cracks of not falling below the poverty line but not able to afford luxuries like school lunches.

Amy and Magnuson  
Falmouth resident and teacher