

Holly McLain
Rockland

Senator Daughtry, Representative Brennan and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Holly McLain. I am a resident of Rockland and prior to the pandemic my children attended South School which serves families in Rockland and Thomaston.

Today, I'm submitting testimony in support of LD 1679 An Act to Address Student Hunger Through Expanding Access to Free Meals. I want to thank the bill sponsors for your commitment to addressing childhood hunger in Maine.

Many kids in the small town I grew up in were poor. Including my family. We often did not have the food we needed to eat daily nutritious meals. I can especially remember one kid at my school who was always bullied and shamed for being poor. I remember watching him walk by me on the bus and noticing that he looked like a ghost - so skinny and pale. Since I knew what it felt like to be hungry, I didn't want him to feel the same thing. When we had extra snacks in my house, which wasn't often, I would sneak them to school and give them to him.

Now as a mother of four children. I can still remember that hungry child and I am grateful that we have programs, like the school lunch program in place to help families. Without these programs many children would go hungry. When my family was homeless, a school in Knox county would give food to my children to bring home so they wouldn't starve. At that time, we lost a lot of our food stamp benefits and we only had one car, so I couldn't easily get to the food pantry or grocery store. The meals that my children were getting at school, breakfast, snack and lunch were a lifesaver. I believe more counties and states should adopt this process because you never know what life is going to hand you. My family did not plan on being homeless and hungry so why should children have to suffer and go without because of situations that are out of their control. In Knox county Maine, because the county as a whole is below the poverty level, almost every child in our schools wouldn't have to worry about food if this bill is passed. And that is what is most important.