

*Senate of  
Maine  
Senate District 15*

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**TESTIMONY OF SENATOR MATTHEW POULIOT**

**In support of LD 1679**

*An Act To Address Student Hunger through Expanding Access to Free School Meals*

**Public Hearing: May 20, 2021**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. I am Senator Matt Pouliot and I represent Senate District 15, which consist of the towns of Augusta, China, Oakland, Sidney and Vassalboro. I am submitting this testimony in support of LD 1679 *An Act To Address Student Hunger through Expanding Access to Free School Meals*.

We all know that it is hard to concentrate or get something done when you are hungry or have not eaten. So now, imagine being a child in a Maine school who goes to school without having breakfast and does not have the funds to buy a meal or does not qualify to get a free meal or their parent does not fill out the paperwork to see if the student qualifies for a free or reduced meal. This currently is happening in Maine schools every day and it is unacceptable.

During this time of COVID, all students in Maine have received free school breakfast and lunch and data has shown that more students are receiving meals at school. Schools have not had to collect money, have not had to figure out how to collect debt, students and families have not had to worry about having money for meals at school. Most importantly all students have had equal access to meals and proper nutrition making sure they are ready to learn. It is proven that a hungry child has a difficult time learning.

In closing, I ask that the committee support this legislation so when schools would have to go back to charging students for meals, all students continue to have equal access to proper nutrition. Thank you.