

Valerie Randall
Sanford, ME / JMG

FULL PLATES FULL POTENTIAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 130TH MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

1. LR 1679: An Act to Address Student Hunger through a Universal Free School Meals Program Senate President Troy Jackson

THE POLICY: The State of Maine would contribute funding to cover the cost of paid students in the School Breakfast and National School Lunch programs, so that all students in Maine can access school meal programs without cost.

Testimony of Valerie Randall, Sanford High School JMG in Support of LD 1679 An Act to Address Student Hunger Through Expanding Access to Free School Meals

Senator Daughtry, Representative Brannan and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee of Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Valerie Randall. I am a resident of Sanford and a JMG student at Sanford High School. I am here to talk to you about school lunch and why we should keep it the same when COVID-19 is done and over with.

Students were bullied because they were not able to afford school lunch and had to receive free lunch for the year. Some would not go get the free lunch in fear of being bullied. This could be one less thing students have to worry about other than their classes. In my opinion, food helps me focus better so I don't have to worry about feeling hungry in class and get distracted. Sometimes I feel off because I did not eat breakfast. Can you imagine feeling that way everyday because you can't afford to buy breakfast or lunch? Why make a student feel like that when there are so many other things to worry about like passing classes graduating and preparing for the future after graduation? School is very stressful enough with all the pressure that's happening today.

Some students might only have to pay a reduced cost for lunch, this still might be the only full meal, and healthiest, they get a day as some families are really poor and can only afford so much for food. Students aren't expected to pay for books, desks, bus fare, etc, why should school breakfast and lunch be any different?

We should look at the changes that were made during COVID-19 and ask why not keep some of those changes? If they helped the students, then why are we going to go back to the way it was before?

In conclusion, I think school meals should be free going forward and not just because of a pandemic.

Thank you co-chairs and the committee for taking the time to read this and for your commitment to the students in the state of Maine.

Sincerely,

Valerie Randall
Sanford High School
Proud JMG Member since 2018