

Testimony of Anonymous Portland High School Senior
In Support of LD 1679 An Act to Address Student Hunger Through Expanding Access to
Free School Meals

Senator Daughtry, Representative Brennan and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. I am a Portland High School senior, residing in Portland, ME. I am also a dedicated JMG student.

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

My story with school lunch includes myself as well as my 3 siblings that have attended the Portland Public Schools system. Currently I am a senior, and I received free lunch up until my Junior year. The ability to be fed for free at school makes attending school a little bit more stress free. Free lunch gave my family the ability to save money for other necessities.

The unfortunate part about my story is I know how lucky I was to have it, because I know what it is like to have lost it. At the start of my junior year, I lost my free lunch due to a technicality; because my mother remarried and therefore filed taxes with her new husband, we lost our free lunch. This was a big disappointment, especially because the system was only taking into account the changing of numbers in income as opposed to the real story. My mother's husband was not my father, and was not financially supporting me or my siblings. Our financial story did not change, yet we were not able to receive the lunch we once were. Stories like this happen all of the time to Maine students.

I think that Maine should lead this topic in the United States to show others how much free lunch can impact not just economically disadvantaged families, but all families. Since the numbers used to give or deny free lunch do not tell the real story, it makes sense for Maine to rid that system and provide meals to all with the understanding that food is a necessity to focused learning. In closing, I'd like to thank the co-chairs and the committee for considering this important bill.

Portland High School Senior and JMG Student