



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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**Wednesday, March 22, 2023**

### **Testimony of Rep. Dan Ankeles**

#### **Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs Supporting LD 1002, An Act to Require a Lunch Period of at Least 30 Minutes for Students and Reduce Food Waste**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and honorable members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am Representative Dan Ankeles, and I serve House District 100, a central slice of Brunswick that includes our downtown, Bowdoin College, the former naval airbase, Mere Point and the home of a certain five-year-old who eats ... very ... very ... slowly. It's an honor to submit testimony supporting **LD 1002, An Act to Require a Lunch Period of at Least 30 Minutes for Students and Reduce Food Waste**. I regret that I can't be with you in person, but I am over in Transportation supporting a number of Ought Not To Pass motions.

I was asked to share a brief statement of support by one of my constituents with young children who have struggled with finishing lunch on time and have - as a result - returned home hungry. I was happy to oblige him, but this same thing has also happened with my own young children. I thought perhaps sharing my family's experience would be good for this committee, and I also think it's important more generally for lawmakers with young families to be more active and visible in all areas of policymaking.

A few weeks ago was Color Week at Kate Furbish Elementary, a way in which our teachers encourage healthy choices through the 5-2-1-0 program. The five in this case is that kids should have five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day, and so what you can do in Color Week is have the kids try food that is a different color of the rainbow each day. The school invited volunteers to serve each day's mystery food at lunch time, so I showed up on a Friday to give all the kindergarteners some dragon fruit, which is actually rather tasteless but was probably a better and more exotic choice to represent the color purple than a slice of eggplant.

I was there for two waves of lunch. The waves went quickly, and the kids were chatty. Even the hungriest little ones weren't able to finish by the time they were all made to line up and head out into the snow. There was a pretty staggering amount of wasted food on each tray, and on the ever-popular pizza day no less. It made sense all of sudden why both my kids and all their friends kept returning home like a pack of starving wolves and eating us out of house and home.

District 100: Brunswick (part)

It's almost like the apple, snack and cheese and grocery store lobbies have teamed up to make this happen on purpose.

But in all seriousness, whatever the final language you all might come up with, if you could find a way to give students more time to finish, or at least make some progress on their meals, I think it would improve both health outcomes and education outcomes.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and for wrestling with the question of how we can get our kids to eat enough while they are at school.