

Testimony of Melissa Hackett
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In support of LD 1002, An Act To Require A Lunch Period of at Least 30 Minutes for Students
and Reduce Food Waste
March 22, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Melissa Hackett, and I am offering testimony in support of LD 1002 on behalf of the Maine Children’s Alliance. Our organization is a public policy, nonprofit advocating for sound public policies and best practices that improve the lives of all Maine children, youth, and families.

We know that having enough to eat is essential to ensuring kids can focus on learning and connecting with their peers during the school day.ⁱ Yet we also know that given the amount of time many students have to wait in line to receive their lunch, many do not have enough time for this essential fuel that supports their learning. If students don’t have enough time to eat, they may be hungry and distracted for the rest of the school day. Additionally, not having enough time to eat means many students are likely having to throw away a portion of their lunches, leading to more food waste.

School meals are the most reliable and nutritious source of food for our children. Given the investment our state has made – which our organization strongly supports – in providing free school meals to all students, we should ensure kids have time to actually eat that food.

Additionally, both recess and lunch are important times of the day for students to engage in less structured time with their peers, which provide important opportunities for their growth and development. As this legislation would ensure, we should follow the research that guides us to having students take recess before lunch,ⁱⁱ leading to decreases in behavior issues and resulting in kids eating more during their lunchtime.

We urge the committee to support this important legislation to ensure our students have not only access to nutritious meals to fuel their learning and development, but also adequate time to eat it. Thank you.

ⁱ Food Research and Action Center, https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/School-Meals-are-Essential-Health-and-Learning_FNL.pdf

ⁱⁱ Action for Healthy Kids, <https://www.actionforhealthykids.org/activity/recess-before-lunch/#>