



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
23 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, ME 04333-0023

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

PENDER MAKIN
COMMISSIONER

March 22, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Senate Chair
Representative Brennan, House Chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

LD 921, An Act to Allow the Local Foods Fund for Public Schools to Be Used for Processed and Value-added Maine Food Products, removes the minimally processed delineation of food, to allow more processed local foods to qualify for reimbursement.

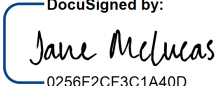
The Local Food Fund is a reimbursement program that matches \$1 for every \$3 a school administrative unit (SAU) pays for produce, value-added dairy, protein or minimally processed foods purchased directly from a farmer, farmers' cooperative, local food hub, local food processor or food service distributor in the State of Maine. Title 20-A, §6602, subsection 12 addresses the definition of minimally processed food as related to the Local Food Fund. Currently, the definition includes “only the washing, cleaning, trimming, peeling, slicing, drying, sorting, refrigerating, freezing and packaging of food items or a combination of those activities.”

Allowing this expansion would give Maine students greater access to food products made in Maine. For instance, a condiment like salsa would not currently qualify for the Local Food Fund reimbursement because it is a value-added product made in Maine. Value-added products are raw agriculture products that have been modified or enhanced to have a higher market value and/or a longer shelf life. Some examples include salsa, jams, and jerky. Under the new provisions, items such as this may be purchased with this Fund, thereby serving to deliver nutritious food to our students while continuing to support the local farmers and food manufacturers, vendors, and suppliers.

This bill would expand the number of products that could be used, thus expanding the use of the Fund and requiring the Office of Child Nutrition to define new standards for the Fund. Additionally, it should be noted the implementation of LD 921 may require some SAUs to incur additional costs by increasing billing, tracking, ordering, and receiving of additional vendors and suppliers.

The Department will be available to provide additional information on LD 921 and respond to any questions during the upcoming work session.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

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Jane McLucas
Director of Child Nutrition

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