

Kit Chi So
Portland
LD 1002

Testimony of Kit Chi So
In Support of LD 1002

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Kit Chi So. I am a resident of Portland and am a graduate student at Boston College School of Social Work.

Today, I'm submitting testimony in support of LD 1002 "An Act To Require A Lunch Period of at Least 30 Minutes for Students and Reduce Food Waste"

As a graduate student of social work, I already hold an MA in Food Studies from New York University. I have worked in food access and education for over a decade and understand, both theoretically and practically, how important it is for children to have adequate access to nutritious food. In my experience, adequate access does not just mean gaining access to the tangible resource of food itself but also requires enough time to eat.

There have been numerous studies published that prove that a hungry child cannot learn well in school, yet research shows that the last student in the lunch line has 10 minutes or less to eat their lunch. Not only should having enough time to eat lunch be a right that all people have, including children, but many studies show how important it is for mental health outcomes for children and adolescents to have time to socialize with their peers in order to build strong relationships. Additionally, most workplaces for adults mandate a 30 minute lunch break, so why do we not offer the same right for students during the school day?

I am proud that Maine has passed the historic legislation to ensure School Meals for All in schools but to fully reap the health and educational benefits of this legislation, we must lengthen the school lunch period to at least 30 minutes. Making sure students have full bellies ensures that they are ready to learn and has been shown to reduce behavioral issues in the classroom due to hunger and results in fewer trips to the nurses office. Many Mainers are also proponents of providing healthier school lunch options for students but healthy choices like raw vegetables take longer to consume, and not having enough time to eat also results in more food waste. Making the school lunch period at least 30 minutes benefits families, students, educators and school administrators, as well as the environment.

I wholeheartedly support LD 1002 "An Act To Require A Lunch Period of at Least 30 Minutes for Students and Reduce Food Waste" because I believe that students should have the right to accessing adequate nutrition during the school day, and this cannot be realized without enough time to eat. Thank you Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs for taking the time to read my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.