



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

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

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COMMISSIONER

April 5, 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 1183, An Act to Establish the School Meal Equipment and Program Improvement Fund establishes the School Meal Equipment and Program Improvement Fund in the Department of Education to issue grants to eligible school administrative units (SAUs) to purchase school kitchen and cafeteria equipment needed to serve healthy meals, to improve food safety in school kitchens and cafeterias, to support the maintenance and expansion of the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program and to reimburse food costs, above the current reimbursement rate, related to medically necessary dietary restrictions of students. It also requires the Department to apply for federal grants available to support these purposes

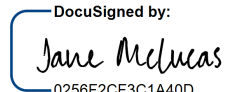
Schools across the state need updated equipment to support the serving of healthy and nutritious meals to Maine students. In order to address this ongoing and very real need, through an allotment of federal funds, the Maine Department of Education (Maine DOE) Child Nutrition team has annually provided an opportunity for SAUs to apply for an equipment grant since 2013. Over the past three (3) years this has equated to \$357,812.00 received by a total of 39 SAUs for equipment such as dishwashers, coolers, freezers, steamers, ovens, serving counters, slicers, ranges, food processors, milk coolers, mobile serving units, warming cabinets. These funds were distributed with a priority given to schools with a benefit level over 50% Free and Reduced Meal Benefit Level. Apart from the current school year, we received more applications than funds to be distributed, this year we were able to award to all applicants.

Special Dietary Accommodations are a way for school nutrition departments to be able to meet the needs of students who have medical needs associated with food or food intake. Procedures require that guardians submit a doctor's note with appropriate substitutions for the student. When the school nutrition department is meeting the requirements of the doctor's instructions, they may be reimbursed at the current reimbursement rate for the meal, even if it does not meet the meal pattern guidelines for the program. This bill would address additional costs, if any for the accommodation to be met.

The Maine DOE does not collect data related to related to special dietary accommodations. In order for this section of the bill to be implemented, SAU's would need to submit documentation of the student, current doctor's note, and receipts for additional reimbursement from the fund.

The Department will be available to provide additional information on LD 1183 and respond to any questions during the upcoming work session.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

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Jane McLucas
Director, Child Nutrition

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jane.mclucas@maine.gov
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