

Testimony of Whitney Thornton - York School Nutrition Director & Maine School Nutrition Association President

In Support of LD 1183

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Whitney Thornton I am the Food and Nutrition Director for the York School Department and the current Maine School Nutrition Association President.

Today, I'm submitting written testimony in support of LD 1183 "An Act to Establish the School Meal Equipment and Program Improvement Fund".

Often York is one of the districts that gets looked over for certain grants, because of our low free and reduced percentage. Our community and schools are amazing, but we too need new equipment. Our high school currently has two large kettles, with an unusable boiler that takes up space and has not functioned for years. We also have 30-year-old ovens that I am trying to get replaced this year, because of their uneven cooking, lack of accuracy, and danger to my staff and anyone else that might be using them.

We pride ourselves in providing nutritious, delicious meals to students (and staff). We work hard to incorporate as many local farms, fisherman, dairy farmers, as possible. In order to continue to provide these amazing meals feeding the future of Maine, schools need to have updated, reliable equipment.

1 in 6 Maine kids experience food insecurity and even in an affluent town like York, our participation has risen drastically since we took away the stigma of students eating school lunch.

I hope for all students across Maine that you will support this bill and help keep our kitchens safe, reliable when cooking in the state and nations biggest restaurant (School Cafeterias) Thank you for your time and please reach out with any further questions.

Whitney Thornton
York School Nutrition Director

