

May 5, 2015

Senator Brian Langley, Chair
Representative Victoria Kornfield, Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Maine State Legislature
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Testimony in Favor of LD 933 – An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Task Force To End Student Hunger in Maine

Dear Senator Langley, Representative Kornfield, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

I write in support of LD 380 to help end student hunger.

Students who get regular meals are healthier, perform better in school, and earn higher wages as adults.

Child hunger is a serious problem in Maine:

- ✓ Maine has a child food insecurity rate of 24 percent, meaning that nearly 1 in every 4 children is food insecure.
- ✓ Maine ranks 18th in the nation and first in New England in terms of child food insecurity.
- ✓ Over 80,000 kids in Maine do not get enough to eat. That is more kids than two-and-a-half times the entire population of Washington County, which by the way, has the highest food insecurity rate of all Maine counties.

Thanks to the Task Force to End Student Hunger in Maine, we have goals and a plan to tackle this problem. We are fortunate enough to have good people who care about this issue, willing to invest the time needed to make it succeed. LD 933 will give them the tools they need to get the job done.

The Maine Center for Economic Policy particularly supports the community eligibility working group. This community eligibility program allows high-poverty schools to offer nutritious breakfasts and lunches to all students at no charge, rather than to only a subset of income-eligible students. It removes the stigma and increases the number of students eating school meals. Yet, because of statutory definitions and paperwork obstacles, schools that need it most are not taking advantage of the federal dollars to boost the number of kids eating right. We owe it to these hungry children to figure this out. Other states have done so and so can Maine.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Garrett Martin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "M".

Garrett Martin
Executive Director