

# An Act To Promote Academic Achievement through Hunger Relief for Maine Children

## Demographics

- One in four Maine children is food insecure.
- 47% of Maine kids are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

## Did you know?

There is no reduced-price category for school breakfast. All students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals get breakfast, free of charge, at school. LD 816 aims to do the same for school lunch.

## About reduced-price students

- 6% of Maine students qualify for reduced-price meals.
- Many students who qualify for reduced-price meals come from food-insecure households.

While their free-qualifying counterparts have access to meals at school without having to pay, reduced students and their families must pay for school meals, albeit not at full-cost. This burden often means that a reduced-price student cannot get school meals, because the cost is simply too much for his or her family. The student is stuck in the middle—unable to afford a meal at school, but not far enough below the poverty line to qualify for a free meal. The result is a hungry student.

## Hungry children cannot learn

- School meals are the main source of nutrition for many children. Maine should make sure that all children have access to good food, and therefore a better education. Childhood food insecurity negatively impacts brain development.
- Studies find that children who do not have access to sufficient food have significantly lower math scores are more likely to repeat a grade, to have seen a psychologist, and to have difficulty getting along with other children.
- Teenagers without access to sufficient food are more likely to have seen a psychologist, have been suspended from school, and to have difficulty getting along with other children.

Let's end hunger in Maine by increasing access to free meals at school for children in need.

## This bill is supported by:



