

An Act to End Student Hunger with an Increased Lunch Period

About the bill

LR 1933 will extend school lunch period from 20 to 30 minutes statewide

Current Situation

Within 20 minutes students must get from their classroom to the cafeteria, wait in the lunch line, get their meal, eat, and get back to their classroom in time for the afternoon session to begin.

Time pressures and poor nutrition

Lunch periods provide a much-needed time for students to take a break and refuel their bodies. For many low-income students, school lunch may be the most nutritious meal of the day. Unfortunately, students frequently miss out on the full benefits of school lunch because they don't have enough time to eat. Once students get their lunches, hardly any time remains for them to finish their meals; and they are forced to eat too fast or unable to eat a full meal. Rushing at lunch often leads to unnecessary food waste and poor nutrition.

Hungry children can't learn

If they have not eaten an adequate lunch, children and teenagers are left with bellies that begin to rumble far before the school day is over, leading them to focus on their empty stomach rather than their schoolwork, and preventing them from reaching their full academic potential.

Extend school lunch period from 20 to 30 minutes

- State labor law requires a 30-minute lunch break for its employees. Maine should give its hard-working students the time they need to eat and nourish their growing bodies in order to perform their full potential academically.
- A longer lunch period will allow students the necessary time to get to the cafeteria, wait in line, grab their lunch, and eat enough food to nourish their bodies. The rush will be less, so they can eat relaxed, and by the end of the lunch period will be reenergized and ready to learn.
- If a school does not currently provide adequate time to eat, the school, in consultation with the district, will be required to identify and develop a plan to implement ways to increase the time available to eat. A range of solutions are available. Some solutions include increasing the length of the school day, increasing the number of tables available, increasing the number of lunch periods, and increasing the number of lunch lines.

This bill is supported by:

