

Oral Testimony of the Maine Dietetic Association **Presented by Patsy Catsos, MS, RD, LD, President, Maine Dietetic Association**

Dear Chairman Brian Langley of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

Good morning, my name is Patsy Catsos. I am a registered and licensed dietitian, and president of the Maine Dietetic Association. I am presenting these comments on behalf of the 348 food and nutrition professionals who are members of the Maine Dietetic Association. We are affiliated the American Dietetic Association, the world's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals.

I am speaking today to support LD 505: **An Act To Align State Standards Pertaining to Food and Beverages outside of the School Lunch Program to Federal Standards.** The intention is to have Maine adopt the Federal rules that are currently under development as a result of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. These rules pertain to nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold on school grounds but outside of school meal programs during the school day. For foods and beverages sold outside of the school day, Maine would continue to follow Chapter 51.

Chapter 51 states that any food or beverage sold at any time on school property shall not include foods of minimal nutritional value unless permitted by local policy. The term "Foods of minimal nutritional value" means: (a) In the case of artificially sweetened foods, a food which provides less than 5 percent of the Reference Daily Intake (RDI) for each of the eight specified nutrients per serving; (b) in the case of all other foods, a food which provides less than 5 percent of the RDI for each of eight specified nutrients per 100 calories and less than 5 percent of the RDI* for each of eight specified nutrients per serving. The eight nutrients to be assessed for this purpose are: protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, niacin, riboflavin, thiamin, calcium, and iron.

Because culinary arts programs would be exempt, the Maine Public Health Association Obesity Policy Committee suggested that wording be tightened to say "to products prepared by" before the word culinary so that it doesn't exempt products purchased for resale by culinary arts programs from outside vendors.

This bill relates to the work of Maine Dietetic Association members because it affects the nutritional quality of foods sold in schools to children and their subsequent health. These federal rules will be a welcome improvement in nutrition standards for foods and beverages that compete with school meals and have been typically high in calories, fat,

sugar, sodium and low in fiber and nutrients. Poor nutritional quality of foods and beverages made available to children in the school environment contributes to obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypercholesterolemia, hypertension and inability to learn at maximum potential.

Consistent nutrition standards based on scientific evidence in the school environment are essential for clarity of the nutrition messages that the students receive; they understand what healthy food choices are when they see them modeled. Consistent nutrition standards also support the financial integrity of the school nutrition program. School nutrition operations are not funded by general education funds, but rather are expected to be self sufficient. The majority of school nutrition programs in Maine struggle with this, and require money from their districts to balance their budgets. Other parties selling food products of either larger portions or minimal nutritional value on school grounds during the school day compete with school nutrition programs, which need the revenue of all food sales of ala carte items to help them balance their budget.