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**Written Testimony of the Maine Dietetic Association  
Presented by Mary Emerson, MS, RD/LD,SNS**

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

Good morning, my name is Mary Emerson and I am a registered and licensed dietitian. I am presenting these comments on behalf of the Maine Dietetic Association and my fellow members of MDA -- 348 food and nutrition professionals. The Maine Dietetic Association is an affiliate of 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 that 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. "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 didn't open it up to products they wanted to bring in from elsewhere.

This bill relates to the work of MDA members as it regards 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 in the school environment is essential not only for clarity of the nutrition message that the student receives so they understand what healthy food choices are, but also to 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 are not, but rather they require money from their district to balance their budget. Others selling food products of either larger portions or foods of minimal nutritional value on school grounds compete with school nutrition programs who need the revenue of all food sales of ala carte items to help them balance their budget.