

**TESTIMONY OF REP. SHARON ANGLIN TREAT SPONSOR,
LD 673: "An Act To Ensure the Least Restrictive Learning Environment in Public Schools
for Students with Food Allergies**

**APRIL 10, 2013
EDUCATION & CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

Good afternoon. Senator Millett, Representative MacDonald, and members of the Education & Cultural Affairs Committee. I am Sharon Treat and I represent House District 79 - the communities of Farmingdale, Hallowell and West Gardiner. I come before you today to present LD 673: "An Act To Ensure the Least Restrictive Learning Environment in Public Schools for Students with Food Allergies."

Thousands of Maine children with severe food allergies attend our public schools. These children are at risk of serious injury or death if they are exposed to foods that are commonly eaten by others without a second thought. Like all Maine children, they should be able to learn in a safe environment, free of hazards. Indeed, Federal law requires that schools must accommodate these children's health concerns and that education must be provided to them in a least restrictive learning environment.

This bill requires a school superintendent who receives documentation that a student has a food allergy to send a food allergy awareness information sheet to all parents of students at the school asking them not to bring or send with their students that type of food to school, and a brochure to the parent of the allergic student containing information on Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and other information concerning coping with food allergies at schools.

This bill is a first step. It is an approach suggested by parents in my district who have been dealing with these issues, who want to make sure that there is a statewide policy both to educate parents of all children, and to protect the health of their children. I have received very useful feedback from fellow legislators who have served on school boards who have said that of course this type of policy is routine and putting these provisions into law is unnecessary. I have received other feedback that this bill doesn't go nearly far enough and would fail to adequately protect children with such life-threatening allergies.

It may well be that we do need a more comprehensive approach. I leave that decision in your hands, after you have an opportunity to hear from parents and educators about their experiences. From what I have learned, it is a serious issue deserving of our attention. I thank you for your consideration, and look forward to working with you to craft the right policy.