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Testimony of Courtney Belolan, Executive Director, on behalf of the members of the Maine Curriculum Leaders Association, testifying in neither for nor against LD 1902 A Resolve, To Establish a Pilot Program To Encourage Climate Education in Maine Public Schools

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and esteemed members of the committee, my name is Courtney Belolan and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Curriculum Leaders Association. On behalf of our members, MCLA is neither for nor against LD 1902 A Resolve To Establish A Pilot Program To Encourage Climate Education in Maine Public Schools.

MCLA greatly appreciates the focus on professional learning as well as the focus on climate education. Supporting the professional development of the education community is one of the most effective ways to strengthen that community, likewise for specific content and skills such as climate change. The NGSS standards were adopted in 2019 as the Maine science and engineering standards, and since then districts have been supporting the transition to a more integrated and critical approach to science education.

Our concerns stem from several areas of the resolve. First, the offering of grants can often present a problem of equity since many of the schools and districts that could most benefit from the grant do not have the capacity to write and manage the grants. Second, it is not clear in the bill if the grants can only be awarded to districts or if community organizations can be awarded the grants as well. While partnerships in this kind of work are valuable and make good sense, we are wary of the grant money going to community organizations rather than directly to schools. MCLA also wonders about the prevalence of local climate-focused organizations that could be successful partners in professional learning in the target areas of this bill, that is “communities that have been historically underserved by climate science education.” Lastly, we have concerns about the lack of clarity around what “student progress” means and how it would be measured. Because of these reasons, MCLA is neither for nor against LD 1902 a Resolve To Establish A Pilot Program To Encourage Climate Education in Maine Public Schools.