

Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

My name is Doretta Colburn. I live in Waterford where I serve as a local pastor, as well as own and operate a fourth generation family farm. Today, I am writing on behalf of the Maine Council of Churches, representing seven denominations and 550 churches with a mission to inspire congregations and persons of faith to unite in good works that build a culture of justice, compassion and peace. Earth care and environmental justice is among them. I write to urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 1902.

Let me begin with a story of taking a walk with our two grandsons, ages 4 and 7, in the woods behind our farm a few months ago. Every fallen tree became a bridge to walk across or tunnel under. Colorful leaves became clustered bouquets. The lichen and moss covered rocks became miniature villages that they literally called out in excitement each time they saw more and invited us over to see. We followed moose droppings and a worn animal trail until we lost it in the undergrowth and spotted a bald eagle that flew onto perch high in a tree not far away. Their enthusiasm did not wane even as we found our way back to the house, carrying with them rock treasures to add to their collections.

Similarly, our other three grandchildren, all now in public schools, attended a nature-based preschool program that has shaped their outlook and love of the wonders of the environment. As a matter of fact, our 11 year-old granddaughter was quick to point out a hawk she spotted perched in a tree as we drove down the road just last week.

A love affair with the Earth has begun in each of them and it is that sense of wonder and awe that needs to be continually fostered as they grow. Climate and nature-based education in their public school experiences will take what has begun in them and connect the dots to the importance of Earth care now and for their future. There are programs and resources developed and being created that will enhance their knowledge of the importance of sustainability and resilience. These need to be made accessible to our educators and supported by our educational system.

Young children are in awe of nature’s wonders. They appreciate the beauty and patterns of the Earth in ways that many have forgotten as they grow. Let’s keep their enthusiasm growing into active responsibility for helping to create a healthy environment for all throughout their lives. The work we are doing now to mitigate climate change, the laws we are passing to strengthen the health of the Earth, the decisions and choices that are being acted on today to address sustainability will only be enhanced when we give our educators and our students the tools they need to further their awe and wonder, and to develop a respect and sense of reciprocity for all that Earth gives us in that mutual relationship of love and care.

I urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 1902 on behalf of the young people today who will become our decision makers for the future, their future that rests in delicate balance, but not without hope. Passing LD 1902 is part of that hope.

Thank you for your consider of my testimony,

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