



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

PO Box 88
Belfast, ME 04915
Phone: (207) 761-5616
www.sierraclub.org/maine

To: Committee On Education and Cultural Affairs
From: Nathan Davis, Sierra Club Maine
Date: February 2, 2023
Re: **Testimony in Support of LD 156: An Act to Require Outdoor Recess Time for Students from Grade 6 to Grade 8**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Committee On Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Nathan Davis, and I am testifying on behalf of Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nation-wide as we work towards combating climate change and promoting a just and sustainable economy. To that end, we urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 156: An Act to Require Outdoor Recess Time for Students from Grade 6 to Grade 8.

I'd like to make two sets of arguments in favor of this bill. The first set is straightforward: Abundant research and expert opinion confirms the importance of recess in schools. The American Academy of Pediatrics issued a policy statement in 2013 (which it has since reaffirmed) asserting that "recess is a necessary break in the day for optimizing a child's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development"; "cognitive processing and academic performance depend on regular breaks from concentrated classroom work"; and "peer interactions during recess are a unique complement to the classroom."¹

The federal CDC and the Society of Health and Physical Educators have observed that recess "is an essential part of students' school experience that contributes to their normal growth and development. Recess helps students practice social skills (e.g., cooperation, following rules, problem-solving, negotiation, sharing, communication), positively engage in classroom activities (e.g., being on-task, not being disruptive), and enhance cognitive performance (e.g., attention, memory)."²

Springboard to Active Schools, a partnership among the federal CDC, the National Network of Public Health Institutes, and Health Resources in Action, recommends that schools "provide all students K-12 with 20 minutes or more of recess daily."³

The second set of arguments is less straightforward but more personal, and asks you to consider what we actually want public education to accomplish. As I face down middle age, one

¹ <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/131/1/183/30893/The-Crucial-Role-of-Recess-in-School>

² https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/pdf/2016_12_16_schoolrecessstrategies_508.pdf

³ https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/pdf/Recess_Data_Brief_CDC_Logo_FINAL_191106.pdf

of the few significant regrets of my life is that I didn't develop a deeper and fuller sense of my physical capacities and limitations - that is, what my body can and can't do - when I was younger. It wasn't until my twenties that I started taking physical fitness seriously, in part because I was a bookish child and simply didn't find myself in many environments where I was encouraged to develop a deeper sense of my physical being. I have been blessed with relatively good health, but still I frequently find myself wondering what other personal experiences I might have collected or small victories I might have achieved had I understood at a younger age that the development of one's physical being is as important as that of one's intellectual and emotional beings. A complete education must develop all three. This bill is a step towards such an education.

We urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 156. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Nathan Davis
Sierra Club Maine
Legislative Team member