



**Testimony in Support of LD 957,
An Act Requiring Water Bottle Filling Stations in New and Renovated Public Schools**

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Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Vanessa Berry. I am the Sustainable Maine Outreach Coordinator for the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM). I appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of LD 957.

The Natural Resources Council of Maine is a nonprofit membership organization protecting, restoring, and conserving Maine's environment, now and for future generations. In my role at NRCM, I provide technical and funding support to schools, businesses, and community groups along their journey to become more resilient and address everyday environmental challenges. Much of my work is directly focused on reducing unnecessary waste. Waste disposal is a growing concern for Maine communities as local landfills reach their capacity and we run out of places for our trash to be thrown "away." Schools are one of my favorite places to do this work because not only are students a great source of hope for the future, but they also are a key stakeholder on environmental issues. The waste we create and how we manage it today will impact our children tomorrow and for decades into the future.

During the construction of new schools and renovation of existing school buildings, school leadership has an exclusive opportunity to integrate sustainable equipment and features into the design of the building, rather than retrofitting new technology into an existing space. NRCM supports the installation of water bottle filling stations during this window because the addition of these stations in schools ensures that students will have ongoing access to clean drinking water throughout the school day without spending money on bottled water and creating unnecessary plastic waste. When installed within schools, these water bottle filling stations benefit not only students, but also teachers, school administrators, other essential school staff, and even members of the community who might visit the building after school hours.

As NRCM continues our work with Maine schools to encourage sustainable practices and waste reduction strategies, we are pleased to offer our support for LD 957. Thank you for the opportunity, and please reach out with any questions you may have.