



To: Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry

From: Ezra Sassaman, Maine Youth for Climate Justice

Date: May 10, 2023

Re: Testimony in favor of LD 1817: An Act to Support Outdoor Education by Establishing the Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program

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Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and other members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, my name is Ezra Sassaman. I am writing as a representative for Maine Youth for Climate Justice (MYCJ), a coalition of over 460 youth from across the state who are fighting for bold climate action and a just transition to a livable future in Maine. I am writing in favor of LD 1817.

Between birdwatching, camping, canoeing, hiking, forestry, lobstering, hunting, and more, the natural world is the cornerstone of Maine's identity as a state. As it stands, however, less than 25% of Maine students are able to access outdoor education.

Beyond the connection to Maine's outdoor heritage, access to the natural world improves the educational journey, emotional and mental health for children and youth. Additionally, Outdoor School programs build self-sufficiency and leadership skills through the healthy challenges that come with an outdoor living experience.

Outdoor education also expands young people's idea of what is possible for their future passions and career paths. Having young minds interested in environmental science, renewable energy, and agriculture are necessary for expanding Maine's green economy and combating climate change. Giving students outdoor educational experiences will made them aware of these career paths and give them the inspiration to help protect Maine's natural resources.

For the above reasons, our coalition, Maine Youth for Climate Justice, urges you to vote ought-to-pass on LD 1817. Thank you.