

Susan Kistenmacher
Farmingdale
LD 1817

Dear Members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee,

I am submitting this testimony in support of LD 1817 which will establish the Outdoor Schools for All Maine Students Program.

As a retired middle school science teacher and current outdoor nature educator, I firmly believe that all Maine kids deserve outdoor education.

Outdoor School programs provide students with hands-on, interdisciplinary learning focused on science and nature. They teach students about nature and interdependency but also about working together. They encourage environmental stewardship and sustainable natural resource management.

When I was a teacher the high light of the year for my 8th graders was a weeklong trip to Chewonki Environmental School. Kids came away from that week kinder, more caring people. They learned not just about nature but about working together and supporting each other. They developed self-confidence and became better citizens. We were lucky. When the district didn't have enough money to support this program we found a grant to would pay a portion of the costs. Not all districts are that lucky. Many school systems don't have the money to fund outdoor programs and so their kids miss out on this life changing experience.

Maine has been a leader in education. I think of Governor King's 2000 Maine Learning Technology Initiative that provided laptops to all middle school kids. Let's be a leader again and support outdoor education for all Maine kids.

Please support LD 1817.

Susan Kistenmacher
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