



Maine Coast Heritage Trust

A Statewide Land Conservation Organization

**Testimony on LD 1817: An Act to Support Outdoor Education by
Establishing the Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry committee, my name is Jeff Romano. I appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Maine Coast Heritage Trust in support of LD 1817.

Maine Coast Heritage Trust conserves and stewards Maine's coastal lands and islands for their renowned scenic beauty, ecological value, outdoor recreational opportunities, and contribution to community well-being. We provide statewide conservation leadership through our work with land trusts, coastal communities, and other partners. Over the past five decades, we have conserved more than 185,000 acres in Maine.

All students deserve outdoor school programming to develop critical thinking skills, improve academic performance, school attendance, and post-graduate success. However, currently less than a quarter of Maine students have access to outdoor school programming, with rural and lower-income districts facing additional challenges to these valuable educational experiences.

LD 1817 has a simple goal of providing immersive outdoor education experiences for every publicly funded student in Maine. From what the land trust community has learned through the years, this type of investment pays for itself in the long run. Please vote ought to pass on LD 1817.