

Jessie Francis  
March 11, 2025  
Stockton Springs  
LD 895

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you to the sponsor for bringing forward this bill and thank you to the committee members for your work on this Committee. My name is Jessie Francis, and I live in Waldo County. I am writing to support of LD 895 as a Mainer, a parent of a Kindergartener, and as an alumna (former camper and staff member) and current board member of the University of Maine 4-H Camps at Tanglewood and Blueberry Cove.

**Children will benefit immensely from passing of LD 895.** Student needs are currently high, and these out-of-school experiences come with a price tag many individual families cannot afford, yet we know how beneficial these outdoor experiences can be. Research shows that students who participate in outdoor education have improved academic performance, increased self-esteem, better problem-solving skills, and improved health and mental health.

**Teachers and schools will benefit from passing of LD 895.** Outdoor School For All Maine Students will supplement classroom learning in classrooms that typically would not have access to these experiences. Importantly, these experiences will be available for all students, bridging the gap in access that lower-income and more rural schools experience. Teachers will benefit from additional opportunities to teach and learn “in the field” and through experiences in the natural world with an opportunity to bring back new skills and knowledge to their classrooms.

**The Maine community will benefit from passing of LD 895.** Outdoor School For All Maine Students will certainly create jobs and spur economic activity (a similar program in Oregon stimulated significant economic activity about a decade ago). It will also create passionate stewards for Maine’s environment who are committed to living and working here. I began attending Tanglewood 4-H Learning Center in 2000 as a child and continued working for the organization, seasonally and then full-time for more than 10 years. If I had not had these outdoor education experiences as a child and young adult, I believe I would not have chosen to live, work, and raise a family in the state of Maine.

I ask you to support LD 895 and vote ought to pass on his bill to improve the lives and outcomes of Maine students.

Thank you, Jessie Francis