

Micaela Tepler
Tanglewood 4-H Camp and Learning Center
LD 895

Hello,

My name is Micaela Tepler, and I attended camp and am now a board of directors member for Tanglewood 4-H Camp and Learning Center, one of the camps named in the Maine Outdoor School for All bill. While my own experience at Tanglewood has been transformative, I am lucky enough to have parents who could always afford summer camp. To give back, for the past 5 years, I have set a goal to send a child to Tanglewood who could not otherwise afford it. This started when I was a teacher at Lewiston Middle School, and for the first 2 years, I could not get a child to attend camp. This was not due to lack of interest and not due to lack of funds, as I would be covering the tuition and needed supplies. I even offer rides to and from camp. I could not send a kid to camp because there are kids living with parents whose basic needs aren't being met and who lack the systems navigation to even coordinate getting their kid to camp for free. There are thousands of kids in Maine who are in this very same situation, and these are the kids who most need exposure to the transformative power of being in nature. Maine's natural resources should be accessible for ALL Maine people, including kids. With this bill, thousands of children will be able to experience things they have never been able to before that most of us take for granted; the calming effects of hearing the wind move through a forest, watching as water bubbles down a clear stream, or listening to happy porcupines speak to each other at dawn. Please consider putting this bill forward so that all Maine kids can have access to these invaluable experiences.