

Lisa DePasqual
Brooklin
LD 550

Testimony of Lisa DePasqual of Brooklin before the 132st Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Dear members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry.

My name is Lisa DePasqual, I am a resident of Brooklin, and I am here today to express my support of LD 550 – An Act to Support Outdoor, Agricultural-based and Hands-on Experiential Learning in Public Schools

I believe so strongly in the importance of agricultural literacy that I volunteer hundreds of hours each year to running a community garden in Brooklin. In addition to private allotments where town residents can grow their own crops, we have an area we call “teaching plots” where we teach each other about growing food and share the produce with the community.

When the garden gets to host students from the Brooklin School, it is rewarding for all of us. Kindergartners digging for worms and pulling carrots engages them with soil health and counting the harvest. First graders planting peas in the spring so they can be shared at our town's 4th of July picnic is a lesson in following instructions, developing fine motor skills, and contributing to town life. One year, when the garden needed an arched trellis for growing cucumbers, we turned it into a math and engineering exercise for older students. But, sadly, the 3-8 grade classes typically do not make time for even the occasional garden session. Their days are packed full with “meeting the standards”. This has been a sadness to me, as I believe that developing an appreciation for food production and hard work IS an essential component of a good education.

LD 550 promises, if I understand it correctly, to give curriculum support and funding for agricultural and experiential learning. It means that teachers will have the backing they need to prioritize agricultural literacy. I applaud this bill, and I ask you to support LD 550.