

Dear Maine Legislators,

My name is Jared Tapley, and I serve as a Resiliency Planner for an economic development commission in Aroostook County. For the past six years, I have worked remotely, often setting up a desk at the Carleton Project due to its proximity to the Houlton Downtown District. This location has allowed me to engage with small businesses in the area while also observing the transformative impact of the Carleton Project on local students.

During this time, I have had the privilege of watching young men and women from Aroostook County develop their potential and achieve their academic goals. Many of the students who come to the Carleton Project have, at some point, been labeled inattentive, disruptive, or incapable of learning. However, experience has shown that when a student's fundamental needs, particularly social and emotional—are met, academic success naturally follows. Rather than forcing students through a rigid educational system, the Carleton Project focuses on identifying and addressing the gaps in their learning, helping them reconnect with their education.

Beyond academics, the Carleton Project fosters an environment that encourages confidence, resilience, and personal growth. Students are given the support and individualized attention they need to rediscover their strengths and develop essential life skills. Whether through mentorship, hands-on learning, or simply being in a space where they feel valued, these students begin to see themselves in a new light—one of capability and promise. Their success is a testament to the power of alternative education models that prioritize the whole student, not just their test scores.

I'd like to close with a quote from Albert Einstein:

"Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid."

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jared Tapley