

Molly DellaRoman  
Brooklin  
LD 550

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Brooklin, Maine  
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Dear Members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the behalf of LD 550. My name is Molly DellaRoman and I am writing today to express full support for LD 550 on the behalf of the Brooklin School, the Brooklin Food Corps and Brooklin's Climate Response Committee.

As chair of the Brooklin Food Corps, I wish to share with you the story of a long-term partnership between the Brooklin School and several organizations in Brooklin. In 1999, the Brooklin Youth Corps (BYC) was founded, and as part of this summer job-oriented program, land from a family adjacent to the school was donated for a school garden. Over time, an orchard and greenhouse was installed on the school's property. Until 2019, the garden was maintained and funded by the staff and volunteers of the BYC Steering Committee. Students and teachers worked in the garden during the school year, while providing food for the school's cafeteria. In the summer months, the garden was worked by the children enrolled in the BYC, learning how to grow food and also how to market and sell it at the local farmers' market. Over the years, several of those students went on to volunteer and work on local farms.

Responding to new challenges with the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021, the BYC evolved to become the Brooklin Food Corps (BFC). This all volunteer-run organization still maintains the garden, which has expanded to become a community garden, with dedicated days for the students to come and learn what it takes to plan a garden, get their hands dirty, taste the food they grow and help harvest for local food relief programs. The orchard is still being maintained and expanded by the BFC. Cider pressing is a favorite of the students every fall. This spring, in collaboration with the school's newly formed Eco-Club (an after-school nature immersion program), Brooklin's Climate Response Committee, and the BFC, a new program will be launched – Growing Up With Trees. Each first grader will be gifted a tree that they will help raise in a tree nursery being installed at the school. As 7th graders, they will harvest and plant the tree in a public or private space of their choosing. One can only imagine what such an invaluable experience may inspire in our students.

This town loves supporting our school in any way we can. We know our teachers are called to perform tremendous feats every day and they excel at it. They also would love the chance to help students to experience even more of the natural beauty and resources that our unique rural, coastal town has to offer. The chance to have a paid position to help organize and communicate with all parties would help these programs to run as efficiently as possible for the school and give our students the best chance they have to protect and preserve Maine's future.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee,  
Molly DellaRoman