



Testimony from Kieve Wavus Education, Inc. (KWE) Executive Director, Sam Kaplan, In Support of LD 895, *An Act to Support Immersive Outdoor Education by Establishing the Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program* – March 13, 2025

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry: My name is Sam Kaplan. I am the Executive Director of Kieve Wavus Education and give this testimony in support of expanding access to transformational outdoor education for Maine students and their teachers, as proposed by LD 895, *An Act to Support Immersive Outdoor Education by Establishing the Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program*.

Kieve Wavus Education is a education non-profit in Midcoast Maine, guided by our mission to: to empower people to contribute positively to society by promoting the values of kindness, respect for others, and environmental stewardship through year-round experiential programs, camps for youth and adults, and guidance from inspirational role models.

Our flagship school year program is The Leadership School (TLS), an outdoor school and teaching fellowship that creates career educators who lead our immersive outdoor education programs for thousands of Maine students a year. We are proud members of the Maine Outdoor School for All (MOSFA) network and a Department of Education (DOE) limited purpose non-traditional K-12 private school. We also partner with the University of Southern Maine (USM) so that any of our education staff can matriculate from TLS with a certificate of graduate studies in teaching and learning and DOE professional certification.

Located at our Kieve campus in Nobleboro, The Leadership School's immersive, multi-night outdoor education programs are transformational for our students and meaningful professional development for their teachers. At TLS, each child is challenged to grow on our world class challenge course and through classes that teach skills and content foundational to future careers in Maine's heritage industries: forestry, life sciences, marine and aquaculture, food and agriculture, and outdoor recreation. Furthermore, TLS programs are incredibly effective at teaching the teacher. They develop classroom management and differentiated instruction skills that lead many of our staff to teach in traditional schools, where they stay for their careers.

This legislation establishes the structural support for any Maine public school to provide their students with transformational, overnight outdoor education learning opportunities. KWE is eager to provide TLS programs for schools from every county in Maine, deepening the education of our kids while inspiring and preparing them for careers essential to our state. Furthermore, Maine has teacher shortages in 17 subject areas and has the oldest average teacher age nationally. This year, 25 percent of our TLS staff will earn certification to teach in Maine. If you scale this across MOSFA providers, we would create at least 20 dynamic, young teachers a year for our state. Teachers who would stay in their careers and thrive.

Our public schools should have the choice to provide our students and their teachers with the most fulfilling and impactful education possible. Passing this legislation gives them that opportunity, while promoting youth workforce development in our heritage industries and creating a pipeline of career teachers for our public schools. Thank you for your consideration.

Sam Kaplan
Kieve Wavus Education, Inc.
LD 895

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