



Testimony by Jason Judd, Executive Director, Educate Maine

In Support of LD 895, An Act to Support Immersive Outdoor Education by Establishing the Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program

Thursday, March 13, 2025, 9:00 A.M.

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, I am Jason Judd, the Executive Director of Educate Maine. Our organization is a business-led nonprofit focused on increasing education attainment for Maine people to meet the demands of our economy.

I am writing to express my support for LD 895: An Act to Support Immersive Outdoor Education by Establishing the Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program. This bill provides outdoor experiences for Maine students in grades 4 through 8. Students will be immersed in the outdoors to support hands-on learning about a variety of topics connected to Maine's outdoor heritage and STEM education. Educate Maine focuses on helping students develop college and career readiness skills so they are ready to thrive in postsecondary education and the workforce. This program will help students learn skills and have experiences beyond what they are able to do during a traditional school day.

Educate Maine recently developed the Teach Maine Center in collaboration with the Maine Department of Education to grow and support Maine's educator workforce. We traveled to all 16 counties to learn from educators about the challenges they face and what they need to sustain and grow their profession. What we heard is that Maine educators want to see multiple pathways into teaching. Kieve Wavus Education leads a teaching fellowship program that is focused on helping young people teach outdoor education and prepare to enter Maine schools as well-trained educators. This program helps not only provide wonderful experiences for aspiring educators to teach students about outdoor education, but it also supports a certificate of graduate studies in teaching and learning from the University of Southern Maine and a teaching certification from the Maine Department of Education for each fellow. If this bill is successful, this program could be scaled to other Maine Outdoor School for All (MOSFA) providers and support more than 20 new educators a year to work in Maine schools. Maine has incredible workforce shortages in our schools, and the teaching fellowship has proven to be a model that has worked well to develop exceptional educators ready to thrive in our schools.

On behalf of our board of directors, I urge you to support this bill to take meaningful action to provide immersive outdoor experiences for Maine students and provide opportunities for more young people to become educators in our schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration.