

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

L.D. 895

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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 members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee, I am Steven Bailey, executive director of the Maine School Boards Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committee of the Maine School Boards Association, in opposition to L.D. 895.

Our association appreciates the intent of this bill, which is to get students outside to learn from their surroundings, offering the opportunity for hands-on learning about ecology, nature, weather and the environment. Assuring the same grade attends this opportunity each year from the same school will assure continuing groups of students from the district will have this same wonderful experience. We also appreciate that this bill would have a large geographic reach across our entire state.

In a world with plentiful state, local, and federal funding, our association would be in full support of this policy and believe in promoting more outdoor education. However, this bill is being proposed at a time when state funding is very limited. We also expect that federal funding will be cut back, leading to less resources for our schools to support our most vulnerable students.

Under these circumstances, we believe that state legislators should prioritize funding for vital existing educational priorities: 55% education costs, universal free school meals, and other student supports. We do not feel now is the best time to introduce new programs that could take funding from these other, core needs that are so important to every school in Maine.

If the situation changes, our board members would welcome discussion of new funding for outdoor education, but at this moment we ask that you oppose L.D. 895.