



Testimony of

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**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
on LD 895, An Act to Support Immersive Outdoor Education by Establishing the
Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program**

Thursday, March 20, 2025

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, my name is Dana Doran, and I am the Executive Director of the Professional Logging Contractors of the Northeast (PLC). The PLC is a regional non-profit educational organization that promotes professional logging and trucking throughout the Northeast, predominately in the state of Maine.

As background, the PLC was created in 1995 to give logging and associated trucking contractors a voice in a rapidly changing forest products industry. As of 2021, logging and trucking contractors in Maine employed over 3,000 people directly and were indirectly responsible for the creation of an additional 2,500 jobs. This employment and the investments that contractors make contributed \$582 million to the state's economy. Our membership, which includes over 200 contractor members in the state of Maine and an additional 125 associate members, is responsible for more than 80% of Maine's annual timber harvest.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify on behalf of our membership in support of LD 895, An Act to Support Immersive Outdoor Education by Establishing the Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program. The PLC would like to thank the sponsor for bringing this legislation forward.

By establishing the Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program Fund within the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Service, schools will have an opportunity to deliver educational experiences they might not otherwise been able to provide. Although significant strides have been made in recent years, there is still more the state can do to provide learning experiences for students who don't fit the mold of the traditional public school system.

Today, every child does not learn the same nor do they all fit the mold of a traditional classroom learning environment. Programs like that which is proposed in this bill, can stimulate the creative mind of students to find their passion.

Currently, there are only five CTE schools in the state that include forestry education. However,

over the last 10 years, the PLC has participated in the Maine Forest Collaborative, a non-traditional education program that works to educate students on Maine's natural resources. Part of the collaborative's mission states, "All Maine Forest Collaborative students are experiencing real-world, relevant learning opportunities, bringing them closer to understanding the careers available in our rural forest-based communities, and developing the skills necessary for success in those careers." It is vital to have programs like this to ensure one of our heritage industries is protected and well positioned for future generations.

While we are supportive of the sponsor's initiative, we would like to request an amendment to the bill. Specifically, subsection 5303, letter C, number 5 should be expanded to include timber harvesting education. Forestry doesn't necessarily imply timber harvesting. We are hopeful that this change will allow students to learn about and pursue a broader perspective on timber harvesting and forest management.

The PLC appreciates the sponsor for exploring avenues to enhance opportunities of alternative learning here in Maine. The forest is one of Maine's greatest natural resources and by educating more young people about forestry, it is a vital way to continue responsible and sustainable management in the future.

Thank you for your consideration and I urge you to vote ought to pass on this bill.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.