

Kate Dewar
Kingfield
LD 1404

Dear Members of the Education and Cultural Committee,

I live in the western mountains of Maine, in the small town of Kingfield. I am a licensed home birth midwife, after school care coordinator at Maine Mountain Children's House, offer a peer support group for parents and babies twice a month at two local libraries, and serve on the board of trustees at the Webster Library in Kingfield. As a frequent library user, I am writing in support of LD 1404 to create a working group on the status of school libraries and public libraries in Maine.

I have lived and worked in many towns and cities in the United States and abroad. I have always found home in libraries. One of the first things I did whenever I moved someplace new was get a card at the local library. I have taught my two kids to do this as well.

Webster Library in Kingfield is fortunate to have Julia Bouwsma, Maine poet laureate, as its director. With a limited operating budget, and in addition to the up-to-date catalog of books for all ages, the library offers: a summer reading program for children with occasional author visits or other special guests, a seasonal story walk along a popular multi-use path along the Carrabassett River, a weekly Lego club, weekly technology help for community members, therapy dog visits, a Letters to Santa event around the holidays, a poetry contest in April, occasional author visits for adults, inter-library loan service, access to Cloud library, access to fiber wireless internet available inside and outside the library, and is open several evenings a week and on Saturdays to accommodate working schedules to increase access to the library.

Webster Library would like to offer more services to the community such as an ADA compliant restroom (currently there is no public restroom), private meeting rooms for literacy volunteers, telehealth visits etc., and more adult programs that have yet to rebound fully from the pandemic. The size of the building is the main limiting factor and would require some major renovations, building on an adjacent lot, or moving to a new building altogether.

Libraries are for everyone, no matter their age, race, income, or interests. They are vital to making a community a home. This working group will find that libraries already do a lot with limited resources and want to do more!