

Jude Marx
Portland, The Telling Room
LD 1389

Testimony of Jude Marx

In support of LD 1389 - BOOST Bill: Building Opportunities through Out of School Time.

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Jude Marx and I am a teacher at a nonprofit in Portland. I'm testifying in strong support of LD 1389 - BOOST Bill: Building Opportunities through Out of School Time.

This bill offers a critical investment in the future of Maine's children, families, and workforce by expanding access to quality out-of-school time programming for youth ages 5 to 13.

Through my work at the Telling Room, a Creative Writing based, youth-serving nonprofit, I have seen the immense power of out-of-school time programming to empower young people, create a sense of belonging in their community, and teach key skills applicable to future careers. I work with students in after-school programs who do not feel they belong in schools or at home, and these spaces have been key to their mental health and empowerment. Caring adult mentors foster resilience, confidence, and a sense of belonging. Studies show that youth with mentors are significantly more likely to make healthy, productive life choices.

The need for expanded out-of-school time programming is urgent and growing. In Maine, 70% of young children live in households where all available parents are working outside the home. While the state has focused attention and resources on the critical needs of early childhood education in recent years, families with elementary and middle school-age children still face major gaps in care during out-of-school hours. According to the National Afterschool Alliance, for every one child enrolled in an afterschool program in Maine, five more are waiting for a slot—a clear sign that demand far outpaces supply.

This gap leaves working families with few safe, affordable options, especially in rural and underserved areas. Not surprisingly, 83% of Maine parents say that afterschool programs help them keep their jobs. Yet, programs consistently operate with waitlists for before- and afterschool care, vacation full-day programs, and summer day camps. There simply aren't enough programs or slots to meet the needs of Maine families. Additionally, the programs that exist struggle to meet the needs of the children in their care. Workforce challenges, children's mental and behavioral health needs, and space constraints mean that needs are going unmet.

In short, LD 1389 is not just an education or childcare bill—it is a workforce bill, a public health bill, and a youth development bill all in one. By passing it, Maine would be making a powerful commitment to equity, opportunity, and long-term well-being for children and families across the state.

I respectfully urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1389. Thank you for your commitment to supporting Maine's working families and the future of our youth.

Sincerely,

Jude Marx
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