

Ella Allan-Rahill

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Orono, ME 04469-5716

Friday April 25th, 2025

Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

RE: LD 1543 An Act to Establish the Maine Green Schools Network

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Ella Allan-Rahill, and I am an Ecology and Environmental Sciences student at the University of Maine and a lifetime resident of Maine. I am testifying in support of L.D. 1543, “An Act to Establish the Green Schools Network,” because I know firsthand just how influential the learning opportunities provided by these schools are.

I have been fortunate to have a variety of environmental-based education experiences that have taught me to act as a steward of our natural world and work to protect and appreciate its many gifts. When I was in kindergarten, I first began participating in the environmental club at the Montessori school I attended. This club taught me about species identification, the water cycle, and the skills to be curious and attentive to the ever-changing nature of our natural world. A skill that I still practice daily.

In the spring of my junior year of high school, I attended Maine Coast Semester at Chewonki. Chewonki, which many of you may know, is an environmental education center based in Wiscasset, that offers summer and school year programs to youth of many ages. While a semester student there, I worked on the farm to help provide food for the school, learned outdoor recreation and leadership skills that I applied on multi-day trips, and learned about Maine’s unique ecosystems by immersing myself in them.

Without these educational opportunities, I never would have become so knowledgeable about this state and so passionate about protecting it. I intend to pursue a career in environmental education in Maine to pass on this gift.

**The green schools network would:**

- Increase access to these learning opportunities by connecting green schools
- Teach students the necessary skills to pursue environmental careers through hands-on education.
- Improve on environmental efficiencies within green schools to help save money and provide safer learning environments.
- Encourage learning on Wabanaki studies and other Maine-specific topics in alignment with Maine's Environmental Literacy and Climate Action Plans.

We all know how special this state is. I'm sure many of you enjoy its changing seasons, recreation opportunities, and wildlife. But, environmental challenges in Maine aren't just going to disappear. We need to invest resources NOW into educating the next generation of environmental policy advocates, conservationists, researchers, and educators.

By providing resources for green schools, you are investing in the future of Maine. This is why I'm urging you to support L.D. 1543. Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,

Ella Allan-Rahill