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[FoodCorps.org](https://www.FoodCorps.org)
Friday April 24th, 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 Malia Demers and I am the Student Impact Lead for FoodCorps Maine. I'm here to testify in support of LD 1543, An Act to Establish a Maine Green Schools Network. Thank you to Senator Rafferty and the bill's cosponsors for recognizing the importance of this initiative.

FoodCorps Maine partners with 6 school districts, both rurally and in some of Maine's largest districts to provide the districts with a FoodCorps member so the school can reach their goals around nourishing school meals and hands on food education.

Maine schools come to us and are hungry for change and want to create greener schools and more hands-on opportunities, but FoodCorps can't reach every school. A Green Schools Network hosted by the Department of Education which schools could voluntarily join, would support sustainability projects in our schools and help schools help themselves to become more resilient and connected to each other and many state based organizations and less dependent on federal organizations.

Passing this bill would lead to the following outcomes:

Stronger Education Outcomes for Students - Over my career I have seen that hands on, project based learning about things that students care about, such as auditing their school's energy use or food waste, and then coming up with solutions, is the best way for students to master content and develop critical thinking skills that will serve them and their communities as the world around us rapidly changes.

More Resilient Schools and Communities - Lower energy costs at schools will reduce financial burden on schools and taxpayers. This bill will also provide busy teachers and school leaders a space to celebrate and support one another which develops their leadership and leads to great self sufficiency.

Healthier Environments for Students - Reducing toxins, improving water and air quality, and increasing sustainability efforts at schools is high impact for students who are already there everyday. Maine schools also serve as community hubs, so these changes will also extend beyond the classroom creating healthier communities.

As someone who works with educators and school districts regularly I can attest to how needed initiatives like this are for educators to collaborate and be supported in advancing sustainability initiatives.

For all these reasons, I urge you to support LD1543, An Act to Establish a Maine Green Schools Network.