



**Testimony in Opposition to LD 1543:**  
“An Act to Establish the Maine Green Schools Network”

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and the distinguished members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Harris Van Pate, and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute. Maine Policy is a free-market think tank, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to LD 1543, “An Act to Establish the Maine Green Schools Network.”

We urge this committee to reject LD 1543 on the grounds that it would expand bureaucratic control over education, shift limited resources away from core academic priorities, and further politicize public education under the guise of environmental stewardship.

At its core, this bill proposes the creation of a new bureaucratic framework within the Department of Education to promote and fund a highly ideological agenda that goes far beyond basic environmental education. LD 1543 envisions an expansive “Green Schools Network” that would not only influence school infrastructure and curriculum, but also embed politicized climate ideology into career pipelines and leadership training for both students and educators. This is a troubling overreach of government authority into local school systems and educational content.

By centralizing authority over what constitutes a “green school” and subsidizing compliance through state-administered grants, this bill proposes to coerce schools to align with a narrow political narrative to access state funds. Instead of fostering authentic learning, LD 1543 promotes conformity to an agenda driven more by climate activism than educational merit.

Moreover, this proposal lacks any meaningful cost analysis. It opens the door for the creation of grant programs, new administrative roles, and expansive partnerships with nonprofit advocacy groups—all without fiscal guardrails or accountability measures. At a time when Maine faces budgetary constraints and declining enrollment in many districts, we should focus our educational investments on core competencies like literacy, numeracy, and civics, rather than subsidizing ideological frameworks or politically fashionable movements.

It’s also important to consider the unintended consequences for rural schools and communities. Many small, rural school administrative units already struggle to meet basic facility needs and staffing requirements. Forcing them to adopt state-mandated green initiatives or compete for funding tied to environmental compliance will



exacerbate existing disparities, placing undue burdens on schools least equipped to implement them. This is not educational equity—it is centralized policy coercion.

Finally, LD 1543 opens the floodgates for further legislative entrenchment of climate activism within Maine’s public school system during a time when Maine students are struggling to grasp even core subjects.<sup>1</sup> By tasking this new Network with developing legislative recommendations, the bill sets up a taxpayer-funded lobbying mechanism that will likely advocate for even more expansive mandates in the future. Furthermore, it further burdens students with material primarily unrelated to the central subjects they need a basic grasp of to graduate and become productive citizens.

In conclusion, LD 1543 represents a classic case of mission creep in public education. Instead of expanding the size and scope of government, the Legislature should refocus on empowering parents, increasing school choice, and prioritizing academic achievement. We urge you to reject this costly and ideologically driven proposal. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://mainepolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/Decline-Report-Final-1-1.pdf>