

To: Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
From: **Emily Vail**, 40 Hawthorne Street, Brunswick, Maine, 04011
Date: April 24, 2025

RE: Testimony in support of L.D. 1543 “An Act to Establish the Green Schools Network”

Dear Chairman Rafferty & Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

I’m a high school English teacher at Mt. Ararat High School (MSAD 75) in Topsham, and I’m testifying in support of L.D. 1543 “An Act to Establish the Green Schools Network.” Given the treasure of our natural environment in Maine, we have a vested interest in doing everything we can to protect it, which includes educating tomorrow’s stewards of our state’s most valuable resource. So it’s time we join other states in developing a network of forward-thinking schools to share successful ideas in increasing efficiencies in buildings, energy systems, transportation, food use, and landscaping. The latter is my particular interest.

Tomorrow is National Arbor Day. To honor the occasion, members of the landscaping committee at Mt. Ararat High School will plant saplings of four tree species native to Maine, representing the four towns in our district—Topsham, Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, and Harpswell. Later next month, during Maine Arbor Week, we will host a formal celebration and tree dedication, inviting kindergarten classes from all four towns to join us for a day of hands-on learning and environmental education. This is only the first step in our long-term project of cultivating an ecological landscape at our school, currently surrounded by barren swathes of grub-infested grass and weeds.

As head of our landscaping committee, I enthusiastically support this legislation, which carries no fiscal note. Yet the energy savings and potential gains are inestimable. Our endeavor to enrich the ecological and educational value of our school grounds would benefit tremendously from the collective resources within a Green Schools Network. Such a network would help us achieve not only our goal of engaging students and community members in fostering a biodiverse native landscape—but also to pursue other environmental initiatives, drawing inspiration, ideas, and support from other schools around the state.

For these reasons, I respectfully encourage you to support L.D. 1543. Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,

Emily Vail
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