

To: Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
From: Katherine Mitchell
11 Highland Avenue Waterville, ME 04901
Student attending the Ecology Learning Center
Date: 04/21/2025

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

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

My name is Katherine Mitchell, and I am a high school senior attending the Ecology Learning Center, a small charter school in Unity that is dedicated to outdoor learning and environmental awareness.

I am testifying in strong support of L.D. 1543 “An Act to Establish the Green Schools Network” because I believe that environmental literacy and stewardship should be considered a vital part of Maine’s public school curriculum. L.D. 1543 will help to construct an engaging support system and framework for environmental education through networking between educators throughout the state of Maine.

As a student at the Ecology Learning Center, I have seen how impactful an environmentally conscious learning experience can be. Students don’t simply learn about the changing world around them, but experience it first hand; and those moments are the ones that will stick with them for a lifetime.

A majority of our public school systems do not prioritize this form of place-based learning. High school graduates walk away without knowing the names of the people who first walked on this land or the rivers that flow through their towns. Environmental education is a distant concept, not something that is found in a textbook. Now as our planet continues to change from an expanding human footprint, it is more crucial than ever to motivate the next generation of leaders to be educated in environmental efficiency and traditional ecological knowledge as taught by tribal entities for generations.

This educational approach begins with providing Maine’s dedicated teachers with the resources they need to do so. L.D. 1543 is a promising piece of legislation that will not only address support in building sustainable curriculum, but provide networks that include the voices of educators, local organizations, tribal representatives and many more to carry out this important work. By integrating this legislation into Maine’s school systems, you would be supporting the growth of the future generation of compassionate leaders and strong environmental stewards.

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

Sincerely,

Katherine Mitchell