

Bryan Quigley  
Brunswick  
LD 1543

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

My name is Bryan Quigley, and I am a secondary science educator in Yarmouth Maine.

I am testifying in support of L.D. 1543 “An Act to Establish the Green Schools Network” because I believe that pulling resources together to create a network of highly skilled educators aiming to engage students in authentic learning is paramount to the future of education. I believe that it will help educators across the state in many ways, but want to focus on the following:

1. Paradigm shift in environmental education
2. Creation of authentic learning experiences
3. Network for creating and sharing ideas

The environment in Maine is changing rapidly with the gulf of Maine waters increasing in temperature faster than other waters around the world. We are already seeing the effects of this shift in our seasonality, and severity of storms. As a state, we have the opportunity to lead the nation in renewable resources, climate solutions, and habitat protection and restoration, but we first need to have a paradigm shift in education. Many places around the world view the resources around them in a different way, and that is expressed through their life styles, education, and policy choices. When I lived in Costa Rica, “pura vida” was a national saying, direct translation meaning “pure life” but really it means living life with respect for the planet and all of its moving pieces. I also recently traveled to the Galápagos Islands with a group of students, and again witnessed firsthand how environmental education and green spaces have created an area where not only people can thrive, but animals in the environment can thrive. This educational opportunity has opened our students eyes to the effects that sustainability can have on a location within one’s lifetime. Supporting programs that show students the value of green education will lead to these skills transferring to their future jobs and daily lives. The Green Schools Network will provide the link across the state to any school that wishes to participate.

The Green Schools Network will make teaching sustainability more accessible to Maine classrooms. The group will be pooling resources from across the state, creating networks of ongoing green initiatives, helping schools to become more green in their practices, and providing real world, hands on learning opportunities for Maine students. I am most excited about the authentic learning experiences that will be created by this group. As an educator, whenever I am able to provide a space for students to actively engage with the material, and to engineer a solution to a problem, they light up and fully immerse themselves into the project. Maine Green Schools network will provide teachers across the state rigorous curriculum that will insight excitement and wonder in the students as they solve real world problems with current data. I believe that producing these educational experiences for students will help create a paradigm shift in our thinking, and move us closer to our green climate goals in Maine.

When participating in the Maine Youth Climate Action Summit at the University of Maine earlier this year, I was astounded about how little I was exposed to the current resources on Green Education available to teachers in the state. There were many independent networks that were already running throughout the state and some are doing similar things to each other. By creating this one state network, we will be able to pool all these resources and make sure they more easily get into the hands of teachers who need them. I am privileged to have received a grant to build a self sustaining geodesic dome greenhouse at our high school. During the application process I kept receiving the same question over and over again: what schools have this program and how successful is it? There was no easy way for me to search for the

answer online, and other than calling each individual school I heard had a greenhouse program. The Green Schools Network would have been able to help me answer this problem, and more. This group will be able to connect teachers and school districts together, so that we can better understand the amazing programs already happening around the state. Specific interest groups will be able to problem solve as a team rather than struggle individually, increasing our productivity as educators and enhancing the learning for our students. The greenhouse is going to be a pivotal project in our science department, allowing for innovative, authentic learning projects in multiple different classes. It will also become a show piece for how a green space can be fully functional and extremely productive. With resources from the Green Schools Network I will be able to easily incorporate new lessons into my curriculum, allowing me to take this project and move it from the development phase into the fully functional phase at a much higher pace. It will also provide a link to other talented educators throughout the state.

In summation, the Green Schools network will not only create a group for teachers, students, and schools, but will be creating a network for the future of Maine where we can be the guiding light for green education in the United States. It's for all these reasons that I highly support LD1543 and respectfully encourage you to also support it in this current legislative session.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,  
Bryan Quigley