

To: Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs  
From: Roz O'Reilly, Orono  
Date: 25 April 2025

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

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

My name is Roz O'Reilly, and I live in Orono and am a senior at Orono High School. I am here today as a lead on the Green Schools Bill Youth Campaign and a rural youth organizer for JustME for JustUS.

I am testifying today in support of L.D. 1543, "An Act to Establish the Maine Green Schools Network."

The education that Maine students are currently receiving was designed for a world that no longer exists. Students are being taught etymology over environmental literacy, calculus over climate justice. They're being prepared for jobs that may disappear without receiving the skills they need to address the reality of our changing climate.

My personal experience, however, illustrates the power of environmental networks. I've been fortunate enough to find a place in Maine's youth climate movement through connections with organizations like JustME for JustUS, Maine Youth for Climate Justice, and the Maine Environmental Education Association. These networks have built my leadership skills and fostered my passion into action. The problem? I've found these networks through personal initiative and circumstances that many Maine students don't share.

The Green Schools Network proposed in LD 1543 would offer access to these networks to students *across* the state, and it would bring those connections to the classroom. Instead of leaving climate education and climate action as a burden for an individual student to navigate, the network would offer a multitude of pathways for engagement with environmental education, leadership development, and climate-career explorations.

This bill is an investment in Maine's future. It would empower existing student and educator efforts while extending support to schools that haven't had the resources to prioritize environmental education. By creating a structure in which students can learn from climate-trained educators in outdoor classrooms and collaborate with climate organizations, our

youth—regardless of their zip code and socioeconomic status—will be ready for the world that’s changing in front of our eyes.

I encourage you to support LD 1543 and help ensure *all* Maine students have access to the networks and resources that have been so transformative in my life. Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,

Roz O’Reilly