

Matt Suslovic  
South Portland  
LD 1624

Dear members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

I appreciate all of you for your consideration of LD 1624 – An Act to Provide Funding for Summer School Programming. Summer enrichment opportunities are a vital conduit for the educational, socio-emotional, and nutritional needs of so many of our students across Maine going into Summer who count on the resources that the school year connects them to.

I hope you'll hear from educators, families, and students who can tell you plain and simply what we already know: keeping youth in community with pre-existing support networks along with their peers and trusted adults is vital for their development as learners and aspiring young adults. I've worked with high schoolers in Maine for four years as a camp counselor and I've heard an echoing sentiment from countless Maine teens. Many who had a continuity of community and accountability through the summer kept them on track to head into the Fall with determination and readiness because they didn't have to scramble to find new ways to meet their basic needs when school lets out. In addition to offering more flexibility to how our food insecure students can access healthy meals, I've seen many times how summer programming often connects students with much-needed formal and informal therapeutic interventions with trusted and credentialed social work clinicians and school counselors. Looking after our young people is one of the most elemental commitments of our social contract and I believe this bill begins to address the enormous crisis of depleted educational funding we're facing with the end of so many Covid-era budget allotments.

Thank you for giving this bill its due consideration.

Sincerely,  
Matt Suslovic  
South Portland, Maine