

Maine Climate Action **NOW!**

To: Maine Legislature Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
From: Ezra Sassaman, Advocacy Coordinator, Maine Climate Action Now
Date: April 25, 2025
Re: LD 1543, An Act to Establish the Maine Green Schools Network

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Ezra Sassaman. I live in Bar Harbor and represent Maine Climate Action Now! (MCAN), a coalition of fifteen grassroots nonprofit organizations from across Maine united by a desire to progress our state forward and engage in transformative action in response to the climate crisis.

In my own life, I see high school students and other young people engaged in Bar Harbor's Climate Emergency Task Force – many in the beginning steps of a lifelong journey of public service. In this way, a budding interest in environmental issues becomes the starting point for civic engagement, growing confidence, and learning more about the issues many young people face and care deeply about. When established, the Green Schools Network will foster this same pathway for students interested in climate and the natural world.

Our coalition supports the Maine Green Schools Network because it will help students, teachers, and schools alike. LD 1543 will help students plan, implement, and benefit from energy efficiency improvements in their schools. They will use these projects as hands-on educational opportunities and as great starting points to build practical skills and interests for their lives after school. Students that are interested in energy efficiency and preserving the natural world today means improved Maine communities tomorrow.

The Green Schools Network will also increase outdoor learning and student engagement in the natural world. This will help students connect with the calming atmosphere of Maine's beautiful woods, waters, and special and unique geographic features and encourage them to care about – and care for – the earth.

This network will enable positive changes for teachers by allowing them to network with each other, creating ties of mutual support to further environmental education in their classrooms. The Green Schools Network will also assist teachers planning and implementing curricula focused on environmental education and Wabanaki Studies, a discipline directly related to traditional ecological practices, in an engaging and interdisciplinary way.

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Finally, the Green Schools Network will help improve school buildings themselves. Energy efficiency and sustainable energy improvements require an upfront cost, but usually save school districts money over the long term, because the benefits of improving aging buildings and outdated energy infrastructure are felt year after year.

For the above reasons, our coalition encourages you to vote “ought-to-pass” on LD 1543. Thank you.