



**Testimony Presented by The Ecology School in Support of LD 1543**  
Friday, April 25, 2025 @ 10am - An Act to Establish the Maine Green Schools Network

**Good morning Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:**

My name is Drew Dumsch, and I am a resident of Saco, Maine and President & CEO of The Ecology School, a nonprofit outdoor school and environmental living & learning center located at the historic 313-acre River Bend Farm on the Saco River in rural southwest Saco. I am also an active member of both the Maine Environmental Education Association and the Nature Based Education Consortium which enable state-wide collaboration on growing environmental literacy and nature-based education throughout Maine.

LD 1543— An Act to Establish the Maine Green Schools Network— will create a state-wide Green Schools network to offer more resources to support the amazing efforts of teachers and students, schools and nonprofit partners who have been building long term “Green Schools” projects, and open doors to schools who have not been able to prioritize this work in the past. We see a Maine Green Schools network as essential in our statewide environmental literacy, climate resilience and climate justice efforts. A Green Schools Network would help build the necessary ecosystem to support the long-term implementation of Maine’s Environmental Literacy Plan, and help provide resources to build more statewide climate education curriculum, support schools as they implement regenerative food systems, establish schoolyard habitats, create robust place-based Wabanaki studies curriculum, act on student-led climate justice initiatives, install efficient school building infrastructure and much more. To quote the Department of Education’s Director of Green Schools, Glenn Cummings, a “Green School” is a school that shows exemplary progress in the following areas by:

- Building strong and lasting Green Schools Leadership within youth, educators, administrators, and community members;
- Supporting the work of Maine school districts in their desire to increase efficiencies and reduce carbon emission in their buildings, energy systems, transportation, food use, and landscaping;
- Constructing an engaging support-system and framework for environmental literacy through the sharing and networking of curricular units, projects, and outdoor activities among Maine educators;
- Establishing a seamless pathway for career exploration and skill development in climate-ready fields.

I also appreciate the experiential learning piece of this bill because I’ve been working on the LD 895 Outdoor School for All Maine Students legislation sponsored by Sen. Bennett and I can attest to the many strong partnerships between public schools and nonprofit experiential education providers that already exists throughout the state. Unfortunately, given current school budgets, funding for environmental literacy learning is limited even though studies have shown that the health, learning and behavior of children improves through outdoor focused, hands-on environmental learning.

I strongly urge this Committee and the entire Legislature to consider and pass all legislation that supports getting our children more experiential, environmental learning in schools and beyond.

Thank you,

*Drew Dumsch*