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March 9, 2023

Testimony of Rep. Marc Malon

LD 612, An Act to Create a Green Schools Coordinator in the Department of Education

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Good afternoon Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Marc Malon and I proudly represent House District 133, which is part of the great City of Biddeford. I am here today to present for your consideration **LD 612, An Act to Create a Green Schools Coordinator in the Department of Education**.

In December, I met with my local school superintendent, who noted that rising energy costs were presenting a significant and growing strain on our district's budget. Biddeford Schools are taking steps to address these costs and, wisely, are attempting to make significant investments in renewable energy, weatherization and other initiatives which will save local taxpayers money in the long-run while reducing their carbon footprint.

As Mainers work to meet our state's climate goals, school districts are one place where we can make a tangible impact. These districts manage many large buildings which use a great deal of energy. Many school buildings throughout the state would benefit from energy efficiency renovations such as added insulation and heat pumps, and from adopting strong green standards in new facility construction.

But in many districts, the work of identifying long-term solutions, identifying funding sources, and identifying and negotiating with contractors falls on the superintendent, and most superintendents only have a limited amount of time in their busy schedules to work on these initiatives. To successfully pursue these initiatives, they need help.

LD 612 would establish a new position within the Maine Department of Education which would serve as a hub for working with school districts interested in improving building weatherization and making modifications compatible with renewable energy resources. This coordinator would support information gathering on available options for school boards and superintendents, provide support for negotiations with contractors, and help districts identify funding opportunities, such as revolving loan funds, the Inflation Reduction Act, and U.S. Department of Education grants for energy improvements at public school facilities.¹ Importantly, the coordinator would work with a broad range of stakeholders who could be of assistance in these efforts, including but not limited to district staff, businesses, labor unions such as the members of the Building Trades Council, and community leaders.

¹ <https://www.energy.gov/scep/grants-energy-improvements-public-school-facilities>

I believe establishing this role within the Department will help streamline necessary efforts to make our school facilities more energy efficient, environmentally sound, and cost-effective. Fortunately, the Department seems to agree. They have proposed two initiatives in the biennial budget which would accomplish the same goals as LD 612: a permanent Director of Green Infrastructure as well as one-time funding for a green building consultant who would provide expertise to kickstart some of these efforts. This committee voted to support these initiatives in its report-back to the Appropriations Committee and it is my hope that they will be funded in the budget.

Whether through the budget or my bill, the goal is clear: our schools need this crucial tool to help them be proactive in addressing their energy costs and helping Maine meet its goals for addressing climate change.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions you have.

[ATTACHED: Endorsement of LD 612 from the United States Green Building Council]



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March 6, 2023

Dear Representative Malon,

On behalf of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) and our community of over 500 LEED-credentialed professionals in Maine, **thank you for introducing LD 612.**

As you know from the interaction we've had with you over the years, USGBC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to transforming the way buildings and communities are designed, built and operated, enabling an environmentally and socially responsible, healthy, and prosperous world. We are best known for our flagship green building rating system Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED), which is a nationally recognized standard that takes a holistic approach to whole-building performance.

USGBC's Center for Green Schools was founded **thirteen** years ago on the belief that our nation's public schools can be integrated models of sustainability for their students, teachers, and community. This includes modernizing school facilities themselves – resulting in buildings that are highly efficient and that support student health, comfort, and productivity. **To that end, USGBC strongly supports LD 612's efforts to create a green schools coordinator.** Assigning a coordinator creates accountability and is a best practice in school boards across the nation.

If enacted, the Center for Green Schools stands ready to provide technical support to the green schools coordinator. We look forward to working with you and the rest of the Legislature to advance this legislation.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Gunby

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