

**Statement of Support to LD 1817**  
**An Act to Support Outdoor Education by Establishing the Outdoor School for All**  
**Maine Students Program**  
**May 10, 2023**

My name is Lydia McAlister and I attend Agnes Gray Elementary School in West Paris as well. Students at our school are fortunate to spend parts of our school day learning outside. Being outside calms people, gives us a chance to move, talk with each other about our learning, and observe the world around us. We know other students do not have this option. We have also both benefited from attending outdoor camp programs through trips paid for by school, scholarships, and our families paying for tuition.

Having these opportunities is expensive. I know when students go home and ask their parents if they can go to camp or on an exciting overnight trip, their hopes are high, they want to be outside. They want to be learning new skills, trying new things. But their parents have to say, 'no'. The cost is just too high.

Last summer I attended archery camp at Bryant Pond. The only way I was able to go was because my parents had planned and saved for it through the whole year. They put aside a part of every paycheck each week and I added to it from my savings account. I feel very lucky that my parents made this commitment. I know they knew how important it was for me to attend Bryant Pond.

If this bill passes, parents will not have to worry about how to provide these amazing opportunities for their children. They will not have to say 'no' or make sacrifices each week. All kids in Maine will have the chance to try something for the first time, learn new skills, feel safe and supported, and build confidence that they can bring back to school and use the rest of their lives.