



**Testimony before the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, and  
Agricultural, Conservation and Forestry Committee**

Neither for Nor Against LD 2214

*"An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025"*

March 4, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, and Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker and members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee.

My name is Drew Dumsch, and I'm the President & CEO of The Ecology School, a nonprofit Outdoor School located in Saco and a member of the Maine Outdoor School for All Network, a state-wide collaboration of eight outdoor schools that for the past 14 years has offered multi-day overnight programs and provided over \$3 million in funding for thousands of students and classroom teachers throughout Maine.

I am submitting testimony neither for nor against LD 2214, the Governor's proposed supplemental budget bill, but I am strongly in favor of funding LD 1817— An Act to Support Outdoor Education by Establishing the Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program, sponsored by Senator Stacy Brenner with lead co-sponsorship by Representative Nathan Carlow. **LD 1817 is an incredibly popular and strongly bipartisan bill, receiving a unanimous committee vote, and having 113 House and Senate bill cosponsors, including co-sponsorship from the entire Maine Senate!** This bill also has strong support from the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine, Maine Youth for Climate Justice, the Maine Education Association, the Maine Environmental Education Association, Maine Conservation Voters, Maine School Boards Association, Maine School Superintendents Association, and Maine Outdoor Brands.

Here are several key points to justify funding for this pilot project:

- **Outdoor School** programs should be for all – LD 1817 creates equitable funding to provide youth development opportunities for students from grades 4-8 throughout the state, including rural and urban settings, and districts of all income levels.
- **Outdoor School** is uniquely effective for students in that:
  - o It is hands-on, interdisciplinary learning focused on science and environmental stewardship, natural resource management, climate change, agriculture, and Maine’s economy.
  - o It supports students’ mental health, social & emotional wellness, improves teamwork, attendance and retention rates.
  - o It builds self-sufficiency, leadership skills, and important workforce knowledge in STEM careers, agriculture, forestry, building trades, and energy sectors.

\$3 million will fully fund the cost of a 3 day/2-night program at an Outdoor School for up to 7,000 students and also fund UMaine Extension’s administrative costs, which include grant distribution, running a state-wide advisory group and conducting an in-depth evaluation on the impact of Outdoor Schools on youth development in Maine. We are also seeking additional funding from foundations, philanthropists and businesses. State funding for this pilot project will greatly increase the likelihood of additional funding from the private sector.

I’d like to express my deep gratitude for the thoughtful deliberation of your committees as you prioritize the final supplemental state budget. I ask that you prioritize the future of youth development in Maine by including funding for LD 1817 in the supplemental budget.

Thank you,



Drew Dumsch. President/CEO

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