



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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*Testimony of Representative Morgan Rielly in support of*  
**LD 895, “An Act to Support Immersive Outdoor Education by Establishing  
the Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program”**  
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry*

Good afternoon Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. My name is Morgan Rielly, and I represent House District 127, which includes part of Westbrook. I am here today in support of **LD 895, “An Act to Support Immersive Outdoor Education by Establishing the Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program.”**

Growing up in Maine, I often found peace as a young adult by the ocean when I needed a place to think and recharge. I would watch fishermen come in and out of Mackerel Cove in Harpswell and larger cargo ships traverse Portland Harbor.

**LD 895** will provide peace to our students through nature. We are seeing high rates of mental health issues among young people in the state with one in six Maine children diagnosed with anxiety – one of only three states with a child anxiety rate about 15%<sup>1</sup>.

Having students engage in outdoor activities, as one recent NIH study has shown, can help improve youths’ mental health and overall wellbeing.<sup>2</sup>

Outdoor education will also introduce Maine’s students to new lifelong activities and potential future job opportunities. In college, rowing on the New Meadows River in Brunswick and Harpswell, was where I first encountered oyster farming and my future boss. Spending time outdoors in Maine’s environment can lead young people to careers in aquaculture, commercial fishing, forestry management, farming and so much more.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.jtqfoundation.org/2024/03/data-snapshot-child-and-family-mental-health-in-maine/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7967628/#sec5-ijerph-18-02506>

The life lessons I have learned as an adult while working out on the water have been transformative. I believe that is the birthright to anyone who resides in Maine, especially our youth, to be able to enjoy the beauties of Maine's outdoors from hiking under the shade of our pine tree forests to feeling the cool, crisp sea breeze while out on the ocean.

Thank you so much for your time, and I urge the committee to vote in support of **LD 895**.