



March 13, 2025

Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry

Testimony in Support of LD LD 895 *An Act to Support Immersive Outdoor Education by Establishing the Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program*

Senator Ross, Representative Pluecker, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry,

My name is Ryan Parker, I am a resident of Newport, and I am the Maine Program Director for FoodCorps, a non-profit focused on connecting kids to healthy food through experiential education. I am here today to support passage of LD LD 895 (attached)-- *An Act to Support Immersive Outdoor Education by Establishing the Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program*

I first want to thank Senator Bennett and all of the cosponsors for introducing this legislation.

As I mentioned, FoodCorps is a non-profit that works at the intersection of food and education to support childrens' physical, mental, and emotional development. Founded in 2011, we've had programs in Maine since our inception. Our partnerships have supported schools in every corner of the state from Portland to the Katahdin Region, Indian Township to Stratton.

No matter the size of the school, whether rural or urban, on the coast or inland, FoodCorps has seen and helped bring about the benefits of kids getting up out of their chairs and outside to learn. Although we work to reach kids through experiential learning right in the schools they attend, we support LD 895 as an important part of the picture when it comes to the shift in understanding society is experiencing when it comes to our education system. Specifically, that children learn best when they are moving around using their hands and bodies and, particularly when they are outside.

This legislation would support expansion of access to some of the amazing experiential education programs that further deepen our young peoples' connections to our great state.



I hope you will support LD 895 and other programs that help Maine children learn in ways that deepens their connections to Maine. I'm happy to share additional information about the benefits of experiential and outdoor education, and answer any questions you may have.

Thank you,

A black and white photograph of a handwritten signature. The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored, textured background. It appears to be the name 'Ryan Parker' in a cursive, flowing script.

Ryan Parker
FoodCorps Impact and Partnerships Lead, Maine
Email address