



Committee on Health and Human Services
% Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

April 8, 2025

RE: LD 1389, An Act to Create the Building Opportunity Through Out-of-school Time Program

Dear Sen. Ingwersen, Rep. Meyer, and Members of the HHS Committee:

My name is Ania Wright and I am Maine Audubon's Policy Advocate. Maine Audubon is a wildlife conservation non-profit – we fulfill our mission to “conserve Maine wildlife and wildlife habitat” by engaging people of all ages in nature through a science-based approach to education, conservation, and advocacy. On behalf of Maine Audubon and our 30,000 members, supporters, and volunteers, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 1389, *An Act to Create the Building Opportunity Through Out-of-school Time Program*.

Education is at the heart of Maine Audubon's mission. We work every day with children and adults to foster environmental literacy so that they can become more informed and effective stewards of Maine's wildlife and habitat. In addition to our long-standing adult programs—including bird walks, trips, speakers, and other classes designed to help adults further their environmental education—we regularly offer classes and programs for children and families, host field trips, visit classrooms, run summer and vacation camps, and provide programs and resources for educators.

Relevant to LD 1389, Maine Audubon partners with afterschool programs that serve low-income students statewide and are currently funded by the Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC) initiative, a federal funding source that is now at risk. This academic year, Maine Audubon will work with over 200 students - and a few dozen teachers - in Penobscot and Piscataquis Counties through 21CCLC and NOAA funded programs.

Additionally, Maine Audubon partners with LearningWorks After School (LWAS) programs, which provides free afterschool programming to students who need additional academic support and whose families may not be able to afford it. Our partnership with LWAS infuses nature-based education and environmental literacy into their curriculum while also helping meet staffing needs and keeping this important source of childcare available to families.

Afterschool enrichment programs like these afford Maine Audubon and other local service providers opportunities to engage students in safe, fun, and meaningful access to additional learning, career exploration, snacks, and other services, while also directly supporting working families. Afterschool programs also provide many entry-level jobs for emerging and aspiring educators and service providers.

70% of young children in Maine have both parents/adults working outside the home,¹ and for every one child enrolled in an afterschool program in Maine, five are waiting.² **In order to support working Maine families and students and to bolster these critical programs, we encourage you to vote 'Ought to Pass' on LD 1389.** Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ania Wright
Policy Advocate

¹ https://www.mekids.org/site/assets/files/2473/mainekidscount_allcounties_2024.pdf

² <https://www.afterschoolalliance.org/policyStateFacts.cfm?state=ME>