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**ATTN: LD 1543 “An Act to Establish the Green Schools Network”**

Dear Chairman Rafferty & Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

As a retired middle school teacher and lifelong educator in Maine, I strongly support the passage of the LD 1543 “An Act to Establish the Green Schools Network”. This legislation presents an opportunity to advance sustainable practices in schools while saving money, fostering student engagement, and strengthening collaboration among state agencies, educators, students, community organizations, and Wabanaki leaders. This powerful alliance can drive meaningful, lasting change in our schools and communities—ensuring that Maine's students build sustainability in their schools but understand through shared action and purpose how to create change in their communities.

This bill will establish a network to promote a practical, locally driven approach—one that aligns with Maine's tradition of community-based problem-solving—to improve school infrastructure and curriculum while facilitating knowledge-sharing among those with common goals.

During my 27 years teaching at Falmouth Middle School, I witnessed firsthand the transformative power of sustainability initiatives. In 2007, Falmouth Elementary School was built as a LEED-certified facility featuring a geothermal heating and cooling system, rainwater collection, and green roofs. The resulting energy savings inspired the high school to install photovoltaic solar panels in 2009, which now generates one-third of its electricity. By 2010-11, all three schools—elementary, middle, and high—had transitioned to biomass boilers for domestic heat and hot water, significantly reducing reliance on fossil fuels.

As a science teacher, I saw the immense value of these initiatives for my students who worry about the future. In 2011, I arranged a tour of our district's sustainability solutions, allowing students to see real-world applications of energy efficiency and climate-conscious decision-making. **The financial savings were eye-opening**, and I eagerly shared this data with my students, sparking meaningful discussions about **practical solutions to environmental challenges**. Inspired by these advancements, I conducted my own research and ultimately installed a biomass furnace and solar hot water system in my home.

I urge you to support this critical investment in Maine's schools for the students in those schools. Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill.

Sincerely,

Carey Hotaling, Retired Falmouth Middle School teacher