

To: Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
From: Elisabeth Bialosky, 46 Hillside Avenue, South Portland, 04106
Date: 4-23-25

RE: Testimony in support of L.D. 1543 "An Act to Establish the Green Schools Network"

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Elisabeth Bialosky, and I am a social worker and I live in South Portland, Maine.

I am testifying in support of L.D. 1543 "An Act to Establish the Green Schools Network" because I believe that environmental and sustainability in schools fosters youth education and leadership. Some relevant background information about me is I have a Masters in Social Work concentrated in Environmental and Energy policy. I was also a middle school teacher for six years prior to getting my degree. One of the reasons I gravitated towards a degree in the environmental field was because of how my students would increasingly express climate anxiety over the years. Some of this anxiety was connected to media headlines, but most of it was connected to what they could see and feel outside. Shorter winters, hotter summers, shifts in their local agriculture and food supply.

Afterwards, I worked with high schoolers in New Hampshire on campaigns around climate education because most of them noticed that access to this education was a gap in their schools. Students who were able to engage in climate education said it helped them with their critical thinking skills and ability to understand how their local ecosystems, food systems, and infrastructure worked.

Not only is the gap in education, but also in the building design. Because the buildings in New England were designed for cooler temperatures, access to efficient HVAC systems is becoming more apparent. The Green Schools Bill not only further encourages environmental education, but also becoming leaders in environmental solutions, such as waste management and building efficiencies. These efforts also lead to job creation in Maine and keeping our youth in Maine with the developed leadership skills they need to thrive.

I respectfully encourage you to support L.D.1543. Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,

Elisabeth Bialosky