



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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April 25, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Senate Chair
Representative Murphy, House Chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

LD 1543, An Act to Establish the Maine Green Schools Network, would formally establish the Maine Green Schools Network within the Maine Department of Education (DOE) to support environmental education and sustainability initiatives in Maine's public schools. The bill outlines the Department of Education's role in guiding, administering, and supporting the Network, while also establishing a report-back requirement to the Legislature by November 4, 2026.

Over the past decade, strong relationships have been cultivated between the DOE and a wide range of partners, including the Maine Environmental Education Association (MEEA), the Maine Outdoor Learning Initiative and its external partners. Many excellent organizations already operate in this space, offering leadership, resources, and training to schools across the state. These collaborations have laid a solid foundation for the proposed Maine Green Schools Network and demonstrate the statewide interest and readiness to support this work. Maine also participates in the National Green Schools Network, which recommends that states develop formal green school networks or regional collaborations as a best practice for sustaining environmental education and climate-related initiatives.

In addition, a Green Schools Summit is being planned for this November. This event will bring together educators, environmental organizations, and policy partners to expand the existing network and build the next stage of collaboration. The formal creation of the Maine Green Schools Network through LD 1543 would allow the Department to announce this effort at the Summit, lending visibility and credibility to the initiative while also setting the stage for future program growth.

Importantly, this initiative can be implemented with no additional fiscal impact. The cost of administering and supporting the Network can be absorbed within the existing Green Schools program at the Department of Education through existing human capital and partnerships.


Additionally, the establishment of this network would not place new mandates or reporting requirements on schools. Instead, it offers a collaborative platform for voluntary participation, professional learning, and shared resources among educators and environmental leaders across the state.

The Department would like to offer the following considerations regarding LD 1543:

- The statutory authority exists to establish formal and informal networks within the departments of Maine state government. The Department of Education currently engages with a growing, informal green schools network, and there is capacity within the agency to provide continued guidance to formalize and strengthen this effort.
- The DOE recommends removing the proposed advisory committee language and any named designation of a single organization to distribute funds. While organizations such as MEEA are valued partners, any allocation of resources should follow appropriate state procurement or grantmaking processes, and authority over fund distribution initiate with the Department of Education.

The Department appreciates the intent of LD 1543 and stands ready to provide further information and support as the Committee continues its deliberations in the upcoming work session.

Sincerely,

Signed by:

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Dr. Glenn Cummings, Director of Green Schools
Office of Innovation
Maine Department of Education