

To: Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

From: MIRA HOTAIT, 67 KIMBALL LAKE SHORES RD, FRYEBURG ME, 04037

Date: 23 April 2025

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

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

My name is Mira Hotait, and I live in Fryeburg, 04037, I am a senior of Fryeburg Academy, and a member of the youth campaign you see before you today.

I am here testifying in support of L.D. 1543 "An Act to Establish the Maine Green Schools Network" because I believe it is representative of the future of this state, country, and world. My future, the future of my peers, your children and grandchildren. This bill is an effort to improve the education for the next generation, one where kids learn to protect the environment that surrounds them, not exploit it. I grew up loving nature, and this was largely inspired by my three years at a Montessori school, but it would be so meaningful to me if that same level of nature education was more accessible, ie. at public schools, which is what this bill strives to accomplish. It means more students have the opportunity to learn about nature, which heals, loves, and nurtures. It means more students have the opportunity to learn about leadership and advocacy, which is what democracy is supposedly all about, and what brings us together today. It means more students have the opportunity to learn about Wabanaki studies, while they stand and live on the ancestral land that was usurped from nations of the Wabanaki Alliance. It means they end this cycle of colonialism, hatred, and exploitation.

I was born in Baltimore, MD, and lived in the constantly developing suburbs between that hospital and Washington DC, until moving to Maine when I was 15. But since the beginning of my memory, my family has driven up to Maine twice a year to visit my grandparents, once in the summer and once in the winter. We didn't get to see the transitional seasons up here, and now they are becoming much shorter. As weather becomes more extreme, it is either pouring rain and flooding every road around their house, or the pavement is scorchingly hot from the summer sun. They live by the Back Cove, and the truth is, when I would watch my grandfather's tide clock, high tide didn't used to look like it does now. I know you see it too.

Visiting Maine was an escape from the sea of concrete that surrounded my home in Maryland, because when they say *Vacationland*, they really mean that it is a place where you can reconnect with water, trees, and soil. And something I've always appreciated about Mainers is their practical, down to earth, and hardworking nature. It is not a partisan action to protect their clean air, drinkable water, and accessible forests, and it is not a partisan action to seek to prevent their, often generational, houses from being torn down by extreme weather.

The primary cause of inaction is ignorance, so let's give Mainers access to education about the environment, so they can give back to Mainers.

To conclude, I would like to thank you for your time and consideration in listening to my testimony, and to urge you to please support L.D. 1543 to protect our futures.

Sincerely,

Mira Hotait