

To: Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

From: Sulwan Ahmed, Portland, Maine, 04101

Date: 04/10/2025

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

My name is Sulwan, I am testifying today in strong support of L.D. 1543, “An Act to Establish the Green Schools Network,” because I have witnessed firsthand how a positive relationship with nature improves not only the quality of education but also the overall wellbeing and sense of belonging for students across Maine.

Maine is a state that is unequivocally known for its profound natural beauty—from its rocky coastline to its vast forests, trails, and winding rivers. Our natural landscapes are not just a backdrop—they are central to who we are. When students are supported in developing a relationship with their natural environment, they gain a deeper appreciation for where they live and a stronger desire to protect it. A relationship with nature is an integral characteristic of the Mainer identity, and we have a responsibility to ensure that this relationship is accessible to every child, regardless of their background or zip code. This bill allows us to weave environmental and climate education into the fabric of Maine’s standardized curriculum—not as an extracurricular add-on, but as a core component of how we educate our youth and prepare them for the world they are inheriting. In doing so, we not only elevate academic learning, but also promote values of stewardship, equity, and resilience that are essential for the wellbeing of our communities, state, and our planet.

This bill provides the much-needed structure to ensure that climate education and nature-based learning are not isolated experiences, but embedded, equitable, and sustainable components of every student’s education in Maine. By supporting the development of the Green Schools Network and advancing Maine’s Climate Literacy Plan, we are investing in our children’s future, our environment’s future, and our state’s future. For this reasons, I urge you, our honorable representatives, to support L.D. 1543 and help us build the ecosystems necessary to create lasting, transformative change in our schools and communities.