

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 1817

### AN ACT TO SUPPORT OUTDOOR EDUCATION BY ESTABLISHING THE OUTDOOR SCHOOL FOR ALL MAINE STUDENTS PROGRAM

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker and members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee. I am Steven Bailey, executive director of Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association, in support of L.D. 1817.

Our associations appreciate the intent of this bill, which is to get students outside to learn from their surroundings, offering the opportunity for hands-on learning about ecology, nature, weather and the environment. Assuring the same grade attends this opportunity each year from the same school will assure continuing groups of students from the district will have this same wonderful experience. The opportunity is an opt in experience and not mandatory, however, providing this experience state wide will allow many groups of students not currently eligible to participate.

We are lucky to live in Maine where we have access to forest, lakes, streams, mountains and undeveloped flatland. We have more than 80 land conservation organizations that make up what's known as the land trust network, encompassing more than 1,200 miles of hiking and walking trails and 275 miles of biking trails.

Student outdoor experience and safety, educator opportunity and professional development, and connections with many of the excellent outdoor learning agencies all will be of benefit to those participating in this program.

MSSA and MSBA both support this opportunity and encourage you to vote OTP for L.D. 1817.