

Anne Hurley
Gouldsboro
LD 1817

Hi, my name is Anne Hurley. I'm from Gouldsboro, Maine where I am a Farm hand and carpenter.

I am writing to testify in opposition to LD 1817 An Act to Support Outdoor Education by Establishing the Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program.

The exclusive focus on overnight experiences in this bill is of concern for 2 reasons:

1) These overnight experiences, while important, especially from a social-emotional development perspective, must be complemented with regular outdoor learning experiences close to home—like the ones Maine outdoor School focuses on, as part of a collaboration with other non-profit, governmental and for profit organizations in our area. Failure to engage children regularly outdoors in their home communities has actually been shown to negatively impact students' sense of the environmental and cultural significance of their own home area, potentially leading to kids growing up and leaving the area, and making them think of outdoor experiences as isolated adventures, not a part of everyday life.

2) Overnight opportunities disproportionately benefit the more populated, affluent communities in southern Maine and the coast, where most of these facilities exist. In Gouldsboro it's not only the public schools and different age groups that benefit from the regular outdoor learning experiences but also the children who are homeschooled. In this area, Maine Outdoor School (MOS) does an absolutely incredible job of day to day programming that has major positive impact on children in this town but also many other surrounding towns. When I talk to the homeschool group kids or any students in the surrounding area and I mention Maine outdoor school they light up in the face, excited to tell me more about their experiences outside. MOS has demonstrated what positive impact incorporating outdoor education into a child's day to day life can do, both for them and the environment/community. Limiting this bill only to overnight programming, age groups as well as Southern Coastal communities would be a disservice to Maine. I believe funding would be better used if given to schools to assess how they can incorporate outdoor experiences into their required curriculum as well as to schools/students across the state of Maine.

If this bill were amended to more broadly encompass the breadth of outdoor and environmental education opportunities and if it were amended to directly support schools across the state, I would gladly consider supporting it.

Thank you,
Anne Hurley