

May 9, 2023

Dear distinguished members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry in the 131st Maine Legislature,

My name is Lauren Jacobs and I am a resident of Old Town. I am writing in support of LD 1817, An Act to Support Outdoor Education by Establishing the Outdoor School of All Maine Students Program.

I am a faculty member of the University of Maine, where I teach in and coordinate our Outdoor Leadership program. I am submitting this testimony as an individual citizen, albeit one with extensive instructional, field, and research experience in outdoor education and outdoor learning.

Outdoor activities and outdoor learning are incredibly powerful tools to support children's cognitive, physical, and mental wellbeing. Many of us know this intuitively and anecdotally, but it is also backed up by decades of research.

Unfortunately, even though we live in "Vacationland," not every child in Maine has the same access to outdoor experiences. My research has demonstrated that outdoor opportunities – including recess, outdoor activities in physical education classes, and outdoor learning experiences such as school gardens – vary significantly between schools, districts, and in different parts of the state. And when we rely on extra-curricular programming to deliver things like outdoor opportunities, some children will never be able to participate.

I believe that every Maine student should have access to life-enhancing outdoor experiences. And I believe that because these experiences are so fundamental and beneficial to wellbeing and learning, they should be a part of public-school curriculum and available to all.

LD 1817 is a great step forward towards bringing *all* of Maine's children into our beautiful outdoors. Thank you for your time, and please join me in supporting this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lauren Jacobs". The signature is written in a light grey or blue ink.

Lauren Jacobs