

Helen Jolley  
Bar Harbor  
LD 1817

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Helen Jolley and I am testifying in support of LD 1817 - An Act To Support Outdoor Education by Establishing the Outdoor School For All Maine Students Program. As a PE & Health Teacher and Outdoor Club Advisor at Conners Emerson School in Bar Harbor, I have witnessed firsthand how outdoor education can change the lives of our young people. I believe all Maine students deserve the opportunity to experience the benefits of outdoor education.

Growing up in Oregon, I participated in the state-wide Outdoor School program as a 6th grade student and I returned as a high school volunteer counselor, all at no cost to my family. It was an incredible and life changing experience. The hands-on learning opportunities gave me a new understanding of my science classes, and started a lifelong love of the outdoors. Today, in my role as the Outdoor Club advisor, I often observe that my students who participate in outdoor learning are more engaged in classes and have better school attendance records. They have a deeper appreciation for Maine's natural beauty and they are more interested in caring for their environment.

Every student should experience the benefits of outdoor education, especially in a state with such a rich outdoor heritage. Yet less than a quarter of Maine middle school students are able to access an Outdoor School program. Lower-income and rural schools are more affected. LD 1817 will bridge the gap and create opportunities for every Maine middle school student to gain an appreciation for nature. You have a chance to improve the lives of every Maine middle school student. Thank you for considering this important opportunity.

Sincerely,  
Helen Jolley