

Maine Local Living School Support for LD1817: An Act to Support Outdoor Education by Establishing the Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program



May 16, 2023

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee:

My name is Chris Knapp and I am the co-founder and Executive Director of Maine Local Living School, a working homestead and education center focused on nurturing the human-earth relationship, located in Temple, Maine. I am writing to express my strong support of LD1817.

We see it firsthand, but abundant research has also illustrated the diverse benefits of nature-based and outdoor learning for youth of all ages (see Maine Environmental Literacy Plan 2022). Outdoor school experiences develop critical thinking skills and improve academic performance, school attendance, and post-graduate success.

Multi-day immersion programs like ours help students connect to Maine's outdoor heritage (such as forestry, farming, wild food harvesting and maple sugaring) through direct hands-on participation. Our students gain confidence, skills for being good community members, and ecological intelligence. We also nurture creativity and emotional health through hand craft and practices that support observation and reflection in the absence of digital devices.

Sadly, the vast majority of Maine youth are not able to access nature-based educational experiences, with rural and lower-income districts facing the biggest barriers. The enactment of LD1817 would be a huge step forward in remedying this.

I urge you to pass and fully fund the Outdoor School for All Maine Students program. Please contact me with any questions.

Thank you,

Christopher Knapp, Executive Director
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