

Arthur N. Pearson

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Statement of Support to LD 1817  
An Act to Support Outdoor Education by Establishing the Outdoor School for All Maine  
Students Program  
May 10, 2023

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and members of the distinguished Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. My name is Arthur N. Pearson. I live in Belmont MA and I am a third generations summer resident of Northeast Harbor, ME. I serve as a volunteer advisor to the Maine Outdoor Schools for All and passionately endorse their vision and mission. I am submitting testimony in support of LD 1817.

Outdoor education in Maine has transformed my life and inspired my 48 year career as educator. I grew up exploring the islands of Maine and at age 16 a 26-day program at Hurricane Island Outward Bound School in Rockland changed my life. I worked there for many years as an instructor, field supervisor, program administrator, and trustee. For the last 18 years I have served as CEO of Thompson Island Outward Bound in Boston. I founded the Outward Bound Professional Learning Lab, a research based national organization, and I serve as a field consultant for the National Summer Learning Association and as an ambassador for the Afterschool Alliance.

The last 18 years of my career in Boston have been devoted to developing the kind of partnership LD 1817 will create between K-12 public schools and outdoor education program providers. I have read the research and personally witnessed the impact on children, schools and families, particularly children growing up in underserved communities at or below the poverty line. Maine is world famous as a spectacular venue for outdoor recreation and this Act will provide equitable access to those resources for thousands of Maine's own children across the state.

The framers of the Act did their homework. The benefits of the Act are indisputable:

**Children benefit** from outdoor education and less than 25 percent of Maine students are able to access outdoor education and this inequity needs to be addressed because data shows that it supports the child's educational journey, the child's emotional and mental health, and the child's connection to Maine's incredible outdoor heritage.

**Teachers and schools benefit** from outdoor education. For example, teachers' relationship with their students grows after an outdoor education program, because it allows each to experience the other in a new light; and

**The community benefits** from outdoor education programs. For example, it benefits in regard to workforce development. This would have a significant impact on full-time employment jobs opportunities for people in Maine right now. Oregon, with about triple the number of students that Maine has, noted that outdoor school programming would support more than 600 jobs and more than 27 million dollars of income in Oregon on an annual basis.

For these reasons, I would ask you to support LD 1818 and vote to pass on this bill. Thank you to the sponsors for bringing forward this bill and thank you to the committee members for your work on this Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. N. Pearson', written in a cursive style.

Arthur N. Pearson