



January 19, 2022

**RE: Support for LD 1389: *An Act To Improve Maritime Education In Maine to help the Maine Ocean School continue its mission.***

Thank you, Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs for giving me the opportunity to provide testimony in support for **LD 1389: *An Act To Improve Maritime Education In Maine to help the Maine Ocean School continue its mission.***

My name is Mark Haley and I am the Chair of the Maine Ocean School Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization that supports Maine Ocean School. Our mission is to enhance, expand and enrich students' educational experiences through private donations, gifts and grants. We have provided funds to Maine Ocean School to support their operating budget since its inception. We are committed to continuing to support Maine Ocean School in this manner as it continues to grow.

Maine Ocean School Foundation's grantors and donors share the vision and support the mission of the school and the Board of Trustees. They see the value in workforce development to support maritime education and alternative learning methods. Collectively, our grantors and donors generously give, year-after-year, knowing that their contributions will help support the future of our historic Maine marine and maritime industries.

I'm asking for the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs to support a path forward for Maine Ocean School and Maine's maritime industries/communities to provide quality and widely accessible ocean-themed curriculum for high school students across Maine.

I've had the pleasure of meeting some of the students at Maine Ocean School in both academic and social settings. I've heard stories of their experiences in traditional public schools and the limitations they faced in their quest for advanced learning and knowledge. The Maine Ocean School offers a dynamic and challenging educational experience geared towards unlocking learning potential by allowing students to explore nontraditional areas of study and development.

A few years ago, I was invited to lead a talk, as part of a podcast series launched by the students about my academic experience, career, and more importantly, my volunteer experience with an environmental nonprofit focused on preserving the world's oceans. We had a constructive discussion about clean water and public health, plastic pollution prevention, actionable ways to affect climate change, and protecting public lands and waters. The insights that the students provided with respect to a water quality testing analysis performed over the summer months coupled with the environmental impact study of Nordic Aquafarms' development proposal in Belfast demonstrated their knowledge, interest, and dedication to making a positive impact on the marine environment and in the surrounding communities. These communities have benefitted from the students' knowledge, involvement and activism. It was inspiring to see the students' initiative and leadership in action when I joined them on Sears Island to help clean up the plastic waste spill in 2020. These towns are fortunate to have such committed youth interested and engaged in their communities.

I participated in a Capstone project for two of last year's graduating seniors, where they interviewed me about my background, education, career, and volunteerism. It has been remarkable to watch these students develop personally and academically, demonstrating mature, responsible, adult behavior. I and the Maine Ocean School Foundation's other board members are excited to share in the successes of the students and will continue to support Maine Ocean School as they embark on the next stages of their academic and professional development. I'm confident the advanced academic foundation the Maine Ocean School has provided them with prepares them for the challenges ahead.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if any further details regarding my testimony would be useful to you. Thank you very much for your thoughtful consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,



Mark X. Haley II  
Chair  
Maine Ocean School Foundation

e – [mxh@burntcoatcapital.com](mailto:mxh@burntcoatcapital.com) | t – (617) 487-3665

# EDUCATION Action Forum *of MAINE*

January 18, 2022

**RE: LD1389: An Act to Improve Maritime Education in Maine**

To: Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

We are writing to you in support of LD1389, a bill to help Maine Ocean School continue its mission.

The Education Action Forum of Maine has heard four things in the interviews, conversations, and focus groups we held this past year that lead us to write to you regarding this bill:

1. **Students** want more opportunities to follow their interests and talents. Maine Ocean School provides a path for highly motivated students to learn by engaging with topics meaningful to them.
2. **Educators** want to learn from successful examples of interdisciplinary learning environments, and the Department of Education is promoting interdisciplinary learning within our schools. Maine Ocean School curriculum is valued for covering a breadth of interconnected maritime topics and could serve educators and schools as a research site.
3. **Communities** want to retain their young people by giving them meaningful ways to contribute productively, especially in low-income and rural areas. Any Maine student is eligible to apply to Maine Ocean School, and they can attend without leaving their community, gaining skills and capacities necessary for local employment upon graduation.
4. **Business leaders** want public education both aligned with Maine's 10-year Economic Development Plan and designed to allow students to rise to their greatest potential. An innovative statewide public school centering our maritime heritage and emerging industries would meet that desire.

Education Action Forum asks the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs to support a path forward for the Maine Ocean School and Maine's maritime industries and communities to provide quality and widely accessible ocean-themed curriculum for high school students across Maine by passing LD 1389: An Act To Improve Maritime Education In Maine.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Chace  
Executive Director

and



John Bird  
Board Chair

**We provide a forum for creative collaboration among all stakeholders to enable an on-going renewal of education to meet the common and diverse needs of children, families, education professionals, and communities in Maine now and in the future.**

January 18, 2022,

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and Members of the committee on Education and Cultural Affairs.

Subject: LD 1389 An Act to improve Maritime Education in Maine

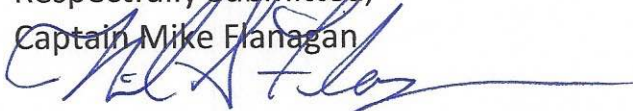
As a retired Merchant Marine Captain from Maine I feel strongly about the potential for the Maine Ocean School's ability to prepare Mainers for a career in Ocean Related jobs.

The school is now aligned with Maine's 10 year economic plan and stands a good chance of helping define the Ocean element of that plan.

We, as representatives of this wonderful state, need to support LD1389. Keep a good thing going!

Respectfully Submitted,

Captain Mike Flanagan

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Flanagan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Master Military Sealift Command retired  
Captain United States Navy Reserve retired  
Trustee Maine Ocean School

January 19, 2022

Elias.Murphy@legislature.maine.gov

## **LD 1389: An Act to Improve Maritime Education in Maine**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

My name is Roger Brainerd, retired Maine teacher and principal. I am asking you support a path forward for the Maine Ocean School as it strives to provide a high quality education for high school students with a strong interest in Maine's marine environment.

Before entering public education, I was a commercial schooner captain and director of the Maine Coast Horizons marine awareness program, providing multi-disciplinary experiences for schools and colleges in New England in collaboration with the UM Cooperative Extension Service, UM College of Education, and the Maine Maritime Academy.

The Maine Coast Horizons Program was developed in 1979 to answer a growing need for public literacy in marine affairs. From our literature then, and still very relevant:

*"The marine world (approximately 80% of the earth's surface) is often called the last frontier on earth, properly inferring that our knowledge and understanding of it is limited. Despite our limited knowledge, we are using marine resources to a degree that threatens to weaken and destroy the thin thread of life that the oceans make possible on earth.*

*In Maine we have an obviously important relationship with the marine world. Our coast is approximately 3,000 miles long including some 3,500 islands, and it is perhaps our state's greatest resource. Our energy, economy, and climate are dependent on our coast, and our history and culture reflect this dependency.*

*The energy crisis and the 200 mile fishing limit have recently focused public attention on the coast. But to relate to these and other issues, to make intelligent decisions regarding coastal use, and to prevent misuse, we must be better informed. The best kind of information is that obtained through personal observation and involvement."*

Even more important today, it makes sense to invest in young people interested in attending a high school with a curriculum integrated with maritime studies.

***Thank you for keeping the Maine Ocean School afloat!***

January 18, 2022

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,,

I appreciate your taking the time to read my letter of support for the Maine Ocean School. My son Heron Wagner has attended the Maine Ocean School MOS since his freshman year of high school. He is graduating this year. Heron has always been interested in working on the ocean, and MOS has helped him make connections in this industry. In his Sophomore year, he was able to intern at an Aquaculture facility in Franklin, Maine. This opportunity benefitted Heron immensely and sparked a new interest in aquaculture. We have a unique Maritime environment in Maine, and I think it is essential to have a public school connected to Maine's maritime heritage.

Heron has made great friends at the Maine Ocean School who have a strong work ethic and exhibit excellent leadership skills. I believe he will be life-long friends with the students he has met at MOS. The teachers are so dedicated and passionate about what they do. They have worked with Heron to develop his research, scientific inquiry, and mathematics skills. They challenge him to question his beliefs and look at subjects from many sides. During the pandemic, they have continued to challenge him; when many other schools were unable to reach students, they kept a strong connection with my son.

As my husband and I are school teachers, we would not have been able to afford to send him to a school with special programming tailored to his interests. We realize that traditional public schools are not for everyone. We were so fortunate to learn about MOS as we did not have to pay for this unique opportunity. MOS has worked hard to give each student the education they need. If students want an accelerated learning opportunity, they can take accelerated classes. If students wanted to attend a technical program, as Heron did, they made it possible for them to do that.

I feel like my son is way ahead of where he would have been had he attended a traditional public school. He is now excited to consider the options for his future. He still has a lot to learn and a long way to go, but he is on the right track, thanks to the supportive culture of MOS.

Offering this type of programming for students may attract more young families to the mid-coast area from a community perspective. Thank you for taking the time to consider the funding for this type of programming for Maine students. Please reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,  
Eva Wagner  
[evavictoriawagner@gmail.com](mailto:evavictoriawagner@gmail.com)  
(Cell:) 207-974-8655

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

I am writing to you as the proud parent of a member of the Maine Ocean School's class of 2024.

As a parent of a teen, I've always hoped that she'd find passion in life, she'd be driven, motivated, excited to learn. The teen years can be filled with angst and confusion and it is easy to become lost and disillusioned, (particularly during a pandemic when so many dreams were stifled) yet with the right mentors and with the inspiration of educational programs that engage and excite, it is also a time where a student's dreams can expand and grow and a trajectory can be set that opens up a lifetime of possibilities and opportunities. Maine Ocean School is such a place. By latching onto the interests of the students, igniting their natural curiosity, and encouraging them to think and question and explore with their minds and their whole selves, they are provided with an education that has direct and profound meaning to them. These kids are lucky, SO lucky. They already know what their passion is, the ocean and its limitless opportunities in marine science, environmental science, fisheries, and maritime economy. Being able to provide my child with an education tailored to her lifelong passions has turned school into something that excites and motivates her. She's not WAITING to do what her mind and heart call out to her, she's DOING it already, which motivates her to reach higher, go further and dream bigger. I feel so lucky to have found such a place that sees not just the potential in my child, but the present curiosity and strengths, and has ignited that light so it shines brighter and stronger.

I implore the committee to continue to support The Maine Ocean school in every manner possible, for isn't that the goal? That our children are invested in, believed in, and set forth to dream the big dreams that will bring our community forward into a sustainable and exciting future? The Maine Ocean School is an incubator of excited young minds full of energy and desire to make real that of which we've all dreamed and is oh so critically necessary for the survival of our planet; sustainable energy practices, healthy and vibrant oceans, communities brought together and enhanced and healed by the ocean which is the source of so much of what makes Maine MAINE.

The future is in their hands. Their future is in yours. I believe this is something we simply can't afford to let go.

Please vote in favor of LD1389: An Act To Improve Maritime Education In Maine.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Kjellberg

David and Emily Hall  
Waldoboro, ME 04572

January 19, 2022

### **LD1389: An Act to Improve Maritime Education in Maine**

To Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

We are writing to communicate my support of the Maine Ocean School and its mission to help Maine students learn more about the maritime community and industries in Maine. Dave's son, David (Noah) Hall IV graduated from Maine Ocean School in 2021. Noah has always been passionate about the ocean and Maine Ocean School provided him the opportunity to build on his interests and knowledge of the ocean, develop leadership skills, and be part of a community that promoted discussion, project-based learning, and allowing students to work towards their goals in various ways. The ocean, maritime community, and education play a significant role in our lives, as a family. For the last 35 years, Dave has worked in the maritime industry and Emily worked in the maritime industry for 10 years before pursuing a career in public education. Maine Ocean School highlighted the importance of education, maritime trades, and the ocean, while providing him the opportunity to pursue his passions and shape his high school education.

Noah grew up on Muscongus Bay, exploring tidepools, watching the tides, learning about the invasive green crabs, and learning numerous facts about each and every shark. He was certified in SCUBA at 15 years old and throughout middle school, his notebooks were filled with scientific illustrations of sharks. When he started attending Maine Ocean School, he was encouraged to build on his passion for the ocean and gain a deeper understanding of how everything was interconnected. He not only learned about the sharks but also learned about the ecosystems they were part of, human impact on populations, and how scientists study sharks.

At Maine Ocean School, the teachers encouraged creativity and discussions while also teaching them to research and write papers. Throughout high school, Noah was excited about projects that allowed him to create videos, conduct debates, and design boats. Maine Ocean School also allowed him to see beyond sharks and start looking into a career on boats. After high school graduation, Noah pursued work at Monhegan Boat Line in Port Clyde for the summer and plans to continue working there. Currently, Noah is studying history and political science at University of Southern Maine, while getting out on the water as often as possible to get seetime toward his license. Maine Ocean School gave him the opportunity to pursue his passions while developing a more interdisciplinary knowledge of the oceans.

Throughout his three years at Maine Ocean School, Noah was excited to take on leadership roles. He got involved in student government, worked with his classmates to plan a prom, met with the Board to summarize what was happening in the school, and checked in with his classmates to see what they wanted from their time with Maine Ocean School. During the initial COVID months, we could hear Zoom sessions where he discussed everything from books they read to how someone felt that day. Maine Ocean School gave Noah a voice and the



platform to develop skills as an empathetic leader and member of a small and unique community.

As a family, we see both the ocean and education as essential in our lives and we are appreciative that Noah was able to have a high school experience that built on these areas, while encouraging him to develop his leadership skills and creativity, and pursue his interests in history and politics, while also working toward a coast guard license. Overall, Noah's experience at Maine Ocean School shaped his current path and provided structure and flexibility where he could develop leadership skills, even with the changes COVID brought to the high school experience.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

David F. Hall III and Emily Hall

January 18, 2022

Re: LD1389: An Act to Improve Maritime Education in Maine

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

I'm writing in support of keeping the Maine Ocean School active, as the positive impact the institution has on individuals, families, and the surrounding community is truly exceptional.

I am in a unique position to comment on the impact of the school, as my son, Felix, who is a currently a freshman at the MOS, struggled in the educational system for a long time. As he grew up in Omaha, Nebraska, we tried different schools, including Montessori, public school, and private school, in an attempt to find an environment where he could learn and develop. Instead, he came home completely beaten at the end of each day. As a parent, it was heartbreaking to watch him struggle. As an educator myself, it was immensely frustrating to see him given learning materials that not only didn't challenge him but often bordered on nonsensical. Moreover, even with an IEP in place for dysgraphia, Felix continually encountered teachers who were unsupportive of his needs.

By the end of Felix's fifth grade year, we decided to try homeschooling, and after a transition period, he finally began to enjoy learning. Indeed, he excelled, especially when he was able to study his true passion, Marine Biology, through an online program. However, he eventually began to falter emotionally: as he became a teenager, he needed to be around people his age more often – the weekly hang out with other homeschoolers in the area was no longer enough.

When my job changed at the beginning of 2020, we decided to look for places where there would be more opportunities for Felix. I had only visited Maine once before, but something about the sense of community here stayed with me. As we looked at the Midcoast area online, we found the Maine Ocean School, and I am not exaggerating when I say it seemed too good to be true, especially as it was not going add financial burden. My husband and I began working toward actualizing our dream of moving, looking first for jobs and then a house, and as we did so, we kept the MOS in mind, cautiously hoping that it would be a good fit for Felix.

Now, I cannot express in words the depth of gratitude and joy I feel when I tell you that, for the first time in his life, Felix loves school. Although he had a lot of hesitation due to his previous experiences, Felix has felt supported and welcomed from day one. The atmosphere of the school both fosters independence and encourages community, and the academics are not only rigorous, they are engaging, a combination that is vital to supporting lifelong learning. In addition, the students at the MOS are acquiring knowledge and skills that will not only serve them in pursuing their passions, they will also enable them to serve their communities. This is exciting as a parent; for the students, it is empowering, which is even more important given the struggles that so many teenagers are facing today.

My experience with different school systems allows me to say with utmost certainty the Maine Ocean School is special. Indeed, it was the impetus of our family's move from Nebraska to Maine, and any expectations we may have had for the school have been exceeded. I truly believe that every community could benefit from schools such as the MOS, and we feel so lucky to have found the school.

I write to ask you to please vote in favor of LD 1389, an Act to Strengthen Maritime Education in Maine. Thank you for your time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cara C. Lustgarten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "C" and a long, sweeping tail.

Cara C. Lustgarten