



April 22, 2021

Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Maine State Legislature

100 State House Station

Augusta, ME 04333

Good afternoon Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Distinguished Members of the Committee.

My name is David Fredrick Hall IV, but those who know me call me 'Noah'. I live on an intertidal river in Waldoboro, I'm one of the three members of the Class of 2021, and the President of the Maine Ocean School student body.

Now, I'd love to sit here and spend hours and hours going over a detailed timeline of my experience here, but I understand that wouldn't be very compelling. Allow me to get right to it: I graduate in 50 days. Make no mistake that just because I'm counting, I have senioritis, I do not. As a matter of fact, if it were my choice, I'd probably stay another year or two. But as they say, *c'est la vie*.

I started my sophomore year at Medomak Valley High School, and after an exhilarating experience shadowing here, I officially started my journey with the Maine Ocean School on October 1st of 2018. During the course of my highschool career, I have received a total of 7 certifications, and numerous contacts with professionals and professors. Beyond that, we have conducted a large amount of field work, which we integrated into our curriculum. You see, at the Maine Ocean School, in order to learn, you have to get your hands dirty, and I like that. Our motto is "Hands on, Minds on". This is the type of school for people who like to learn through doing, rather than listening or reading. And though we take notes and read, the Maine Ocean School pushes us as students out of our comfort zones, encouraging us to do better.

But even with such impressive and appealing academic benefits and achievements, I still struggled with the hefty transition of a larger highschool to that of a smaller, newer program. In reflection, I always reached the same conclusion: we are a start-up school, we are not perfect. You have to be patient. I learned that if you are truly passionate about something, you have to cooperate. You have to contribute in any way that you can. Even if it's challenging. That's one very important thing that this school has taught me. The value of patience. I stayed because I cared too much to leave, and because of that, I was privileged with a front row seat of witnessing our progress, our growth. But I didn't just witness it. I took part in creating it. I was part of the inaugural class, and I took part in the success of the Maine Ocean School.



Last year, around March, our progress, our growth, and our momentum, all came to a screeching halt due to the Coronavirus pandemic. In a period of 24 hours, we went from in-person learning to exclusively virtual-learning. Though it was a seamless transition, we did have subsequent struggles due to poor internet, inexperience with technology, or loneliness. During the lockdown, as I sat in isolation from my friends and family, I made myself a promise: that if things ever returned the way that they once were, I'd never take it for granted. And as soon as I stepped back into our classrooms, I lived by that rule. I know that things aren't exactly back to the normal, but we're getting there. We're getting back pieces of how things used to be, who we were. The world around us has changed, and we must adapt.

Aside from the fact that this is my senior year, the focus has been on adapting to the pandemic, and how we can best perform during this trying time. It has certainly been an interesting learning curve, but we're overcoming it. All in all, it's been a good year. I was fortunate enough to be elected student body president. I'm proud to represent my fellow peers in meetings and during events. The group of students we have here are the most passionate, talented, and determined kids I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. I care about each and everyone of them very much, and I will do whatever it takes to ensure their success. And that is why I'm here. I want you to consider my experiences with the Maine Ocean School. And now, with 50 days left, as I look back, and I ask myself, what was the most valuable thing I got from this school - Was it the field work? No. Was it the certifications? No. It was the life-lessons, the experiences. It was the friendships, the events, meeting new people, networking. It was the memories.

In conclusion, I ask you all to please vote in favor of LD 1389, so that future students may also benefit from the Maine Ocean School program as I have. Thank you.

Respectfully,
David Hall IV