

John Mullaney
The Education Action Forum of Maine

38 Barrett's Way, Woolwich, ME 04579
(207) 593-1664 www.edforumofmaine.org
April 19, 2021

Re: LD1389 - An Act to Improve Maritime Education in Maine, "Ought to Pass"

Thank you for the opportunity to support LD 1389. The Education Action Forum of Maine endeavors to promote diverse and innovative public education models for families across the state. In its relatively short time of operation, the Maine Ocean School has emerged as a beacon of excellence in Maine's public education system. It exemplifies how a carefully developed, local community-based response to an educational need provides valuable options for students. Carefully nurtured with the support of the DOE and the Legislature, the Maine Ocean School will soon emerge as a beacon nationally for marine science education. In terms of governance, the school is the outcome of years of community input, engagement, and research as to how the school could meet a specialized demand emerging from a changing economy. The board oversees the development of a curriculum that has the flexibility to meet the immediate needs for the changing economic opportunities in the maritime industry. Given our culture of local control of education, the governance structure of the Maine Ocean School epitomizes a high quality and publicly accountable version of local control, with a board that follows strict rules of both the DOE and the nonprofit sector. Although the model diverges from the standard local school board model of governance, its diversity should be welcomed.

Regarding leadership, the Maine Ocean School board has hired a director with impeccable qualifications to serve as a visionary leader in this emerging field.

Under the leadership of an adept team of teachers, the school developed a curriculum that meets the needs of a niche area of student interest, and which is providing students with opportunities to be employed upon graduation. At the same time, students take courses that will prepare them to meet Maine's graduation standards and post-secondary programs. Because of its governance, its leadership and its curriculum, Maine Ocean School opened as the state's second magnet school. In its few short years of existence, Maine Ocean School has not only met, but exceeded the threshold for educational excellence, and we encourage the Committee to work to ensure the future viability of this unique institution. Please vote Ought to Pass on LD 1389.

John Mullaney
Executive Director
Education Action Forum of Maine