



Maine Education Association

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**Testimony
In Support of
LD 612 An Act to Create a Green Schools Coordinator in the Department of Education
Krystyna Dzialo, Deputy Executive Director, Maine Education Association
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs
March 9, 2023**

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

My name is Krystyna Dzialo. My pronouns are she, her, hers. I am proud to serve as the Deputy Executive Director for the Maine Education Association. The MEA represents nearly 24,000 educators in our Maine system of public education in pre-K-12 schools as well as in our institutions of higher education, both the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System, along with students in teacher prep programs as well as many retired educators.

I am submitting testimony on behalf of the MEA in support of LD 612 An Act to Create a Green Schools Coordinator in the Department of Education.

As climate change continues to intensify, and schools and communities look for ways to do their part in combating climate change, this bill is a key step in supporting schools in this effort.

There are many ways that schools can make changes in their facilities to move away from their reliance on fossil fuels and shift towards increasing the use of renewable energy resources, such as solar power. Making this shift will also save schools and taxpayers money and allow for more resources to be spent on students and education. The federal Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 provides the resources from the federal level to support schools who invest in clean energy projects.

Additionally, schools and communities can utilize federal resources such as the ARPA funds to improve their building envelope and weatherize buildings. Improving insulation and stopping air infiltration will provide long term investments for school buildings. Too often, students and educators are learning and teaching in classrooms and schools that are too cold in the winter and too hot in the early fall/late spring. Improvements to air quality is also a critical area of focus for school districts. Air quality is an issue for students and teachers alike. Creating better environments for our students to learn and grow in is important for their success.

The potential for improvements to school buildings, air quality and reducing reliance on fossil fuels is important. The reality is that school districts have limited human resources to become experts on funding sources, processes, and to prioritize what is possible and effective in order to make changes. Establishing a position at the Department of Education for someone who can help coordinate, problem

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solve and share successes will be essential in aiding school districts with creating green schools in order to save taxpayer money and create healthy, clean and safe environments for students and teachers.

MEA is a member of the Maine Labor Climate Council and meets with other unions who are engaged in this work and who are in compliance with the labor standards included in the federal funding. LD 612 presents an opportunity for Maine to move forward in addressing this impending crisis and improving the conditions in our public schools.

I urge you to support LD 612.