

TESTIMONY OF OLIVIA L. GRISET  
MAINE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

IN SUPPORT OF

LD 612, AN ACT TO CREATE A GREEN SCHOOLS COORDINATOR  
IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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

My name is Olivia Griset. I am the Executive Director of the Maine Environmental Education Association (MEEA). I am here today on behalf of MEEA to testify in support of LD 612.

MEEA is a nonprofit statewide professional network representing over 1,500 Maine educators, both classroom teachers and community based educators at libraries, museums, and science and nature centers. For forty years we have supported Maine educators in providing high quality, locally relevant, hands-on experience for Maine youth.

I am testifying today in support of LD 612 because it will save Maine school districts money by helping them reduce their energy-related spending as well as their carbon footprint. As community facilities, Maine's school buildings use significant amounts of energy for heating, cooling, lighting, and other essential facilities. We all know how much the cost of energy has increased lately, and when it comes to school districts the cost ultimately falls on Maine taxpayers. Maine's also pursuing policies to decarbonize our society, and investing in our school buildings and transportation offers unique opportunities to combine education and energy-related community savings and create jobs.

This bill will give schools the support they need, by creating a state-level Green Schools Coordinator, to assist department staff and community members in establishing school facility priorities and working with school districts regarding building weatherization and modification for the use of renewable energy resources. The coordinator would help school districts navigate valuable opportunities including federal grants under the Inflation Reduction Act and other laws, revolving loan funds, and technical assistance. Without a coordinator at the state level, each school district will have to find its own way. The coordinator position established in LD 612 would efficiently serve as a navigator for our school districts.

Thank you so much for considering this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions and support the Committee in the upcoming work session.