



# SIERRA CLUB

## MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

From: Sarah Fitzpatrick, Sierra Club Maine

Date: January 25, 2022

Re: **Testimony in Support of L.D. 1902 Resolve, To Establish a Pilot Program To Encourage Climate Education in Maine Public Schools**

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Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Sarah Fitzpatrick, and I am a resident of New Gloucester. I write today as a stay-at-home mom and volunteer with Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nation-wide, and we urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" for LD 1902.

LD 1902 provides imperative support for Maine educators to meet state standards and effectively educate their students. It will fund climate education professional development for educators and enable partnerships between schools and nonprofit community-based organizations. The effort to combat climate change begins with early and continuous education. Prioritizing the interdisciplinary study of environmental sciences within Maine's public schools and fostering cooperation between these districts and community-based organizations would be beneficial within and beyond Maine's borders.

It has been found in community-based climate education programs that [youths developed ecological knowledge, expertise, and \[the\] capacity to take action](#). These style programs allow students to thrive, creatively engaging them in curriculum content and retaining subject matter better. This program will both prepare them for and inspire them to pursue careers within the realm of environmental protection and sciences whilst conveniently bridging the gap of available and interested workers for these positions.

Ambitious youths fighting climate change within their communities will expand the shared responsibility, ignite change on a local level, and spread awareness.

Climate change typically impacts underserved communities significantly more than their wealthy neighbors. This bill prioritizes these school districts and their communities ensuring an equitable distribution of funds.

A majority of Mainers consistently support climate action initiatives, and Maine's educators have identified climate change education as their highest priority for professional development support. Maine educators also recognize that a lack of training is a significant barrier to meeting [climate education standards](#). Those eligible to receive grants through the pilot program will then be better equipped to meet these standards.

LD 1902 benefits Maine's ecological well-being, educators, students, and their communities. This grant program is an investment Maine needs. Please support LD 1902 and vote "Ought to Pass".

Respectfully,

Sarah Fitzpatrick  
Legislative Team Volunteer