

The Blue Hill Harbor School
8 Mill Street • PO Box 1629
Blue Hill, ME 04614 • (207) 374-5501

May 6, 2009

Dear Legislator:

I am writing to ask for your support of LD 1640, the proposed enabling legislation for public Charter Schools in Maine.

I am a founder and Board member of The Blue Hill Harbor School (BHHS) in Blue Hill, Maine, a 9-12 school, completing its second year of operation.

BHHS is a private school, fully approved by the Maine Department of Education, qualifying it for tuition from sending districts and meeting all state diploma requirements;
BHHS is one of over 70 affiliates of EdVisions, an organization which has received support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation;
The BHHS academic program provides students with the flexibility to achieve to their highest potential; Personal and group projects offer opportunities to experience real world applications of the knowledge and skills that are integral to success in life beyond high school.
Students work with professionals at every level from class participation to projects and internships.
The school's co-curricular program offers music and sports options.

If Maine joins the 40 other states with Charter School legislation, our school would potentially qualify for \$450,000 in federal funds over 3 years. There will be no additional financial burden to state taxpayers.

BHHS would also be permitted to hire the highly qualified professional educators now working with our students on a volunteer, part time basis. For example, BHHS currently has a retired Professor of Mycology from the University of Georgia, working as a volunteer on a water pollution remediation project, providing to students rigorous lab science experience in the process. Under the Charter School law, we would be permitted to hire this qualified (but uncertified) professional, only requiring him to meet the DOE fingerprinting requirements. The direct benefit to students is obvious and measurable.

If one considers the *students* of Maine as the priority, the benefits of Charter legislation are irrefutable. Maine is currently failing so many children. Charter legislation would allow the many smart, innovative and experienced educators in this state the freedom to address this dire situation. It is happening now at BHHS, which has had to rely on the generosity of a few visionaries who understand the current situation and see the amazing possibilities for Maine students.

We invite you to call us at BHHS to schedule a visit. Our students are respectful, hard-working and serious about learning. We believe that BHHS could truly be the perfect Maine Charter School model and we would love it if you would come and share in our excitement.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Regina M. Volkwein