September 10, 2017

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing today to share my comments on the existing Maine science standards and to add my support of Maine adopting the Next Generation Science Standards for our students.

I am a recently retired fourth grade teacher who has taught for forty-two years. I am also a member, and a past president, of the Maine Science Teachers Association, the former Elementary/Middle School representative on the Governor’s STEM Council and the 2010 Elementary Science recipient of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching (PAESMT). I have used the Maine Learning Results in my teaching of first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth grade students. I also was one of over one hundred Maine teachers that read and provided input on the NGSS as the various versions were released for public comments, reading and commenting on both the K-2 and 3-5 sections.

As a former primary teacher it excites me that the NGSS K-2 grade band receives the same attention to content, practices, and crosscutting concepts. The progression through grades 3-5, junior high and high school allows students an opportunity to continue the progression of science knowledge in curricula grounded in research and knowledge of how students learn. Having opportunities to engage in science and engineering practices will prepare our students for the STEM careers of the future. They will be more fully prepared to become educated and engaged citizens of our beautiful state. The MLRs have the process skills and concepts, but separate them into accountability standards and non-accountability standards.

I believe these standards are necessary for all of our kids. At this time, science is not being taught in many of our primary and even elementary schools in deference to the Language Arts and Math. Maine needs better science education for our students. Adoption of the NGSS will give educators a tool to help make sure that happens.

I am excited at the possibility that Maine’s students will have standards that are concise and understandable. Thus leaving no confusion and elimination of skills because they are not intertwined within the content standards, as in the MLRs we have today.

Please consider that many of the districts across Maine are already using the NGSS a guide to building curriculum at the local level. It would only be fair to have these standards be state wide so that all Maine students could receive instruction that combines the three dimensions of science and engineering, disciplinary core ideas and crosscutting concepts.

As educators, we are looking forward to an opportunity to bring on the NGSS in our classrooms. Our students are counting on you to care about their futures.

Laurette Darling
Fayette, Maine