

Torrie Sakalsky
151 Ridge Road
Hackettstown, NJ 07840
March 23, 2022

The Honorable Michael J. Doherty
127 Belvidere Ave., 2nd Floor
Washington, NJ 07882

Dear Senator Doherty,

I am Torrie Sakalsky residing in Hackettstown, New Jersey. I am writing in support of Senate Bill S438, which would give the Friends of NJSOC responsibility for managing the New Jersey School of Conservation. This group stepped up when Montclair State University closed the facility on July 1, 2020 and walked away, taking most of the equipment that belonged to the school with them, and making it known that they were no longer interested in managing it.

This small group has worked tirelessly to reopen the School of Conservation. I can tell you that there is no other group of people that are as dedicated to the success of NJSOC as these people are. Every one of the Friends has a long history with the NJSOC and understands, better than anyone else, what goes on there and what this exceptional school has to offer to the citizens of New Jersey. If you want to know how I know this, my sister, Shayne Russell, is the Vice-President of the Friends. Shayne and Kerry Kirk Pflugh, President of the Friends, were my cabinmates back in the late 60s when we were all campers at NJSOC's summer camp, Camp Wapalanne. Right up until today, I will honestly tell anyone that I learned more about nature, science and our environment during those summer months spent at that camp than at any other time in my life. During high school, I was fortunate to witness the magic of NJSOC again when our ecology class visited NJSOC. During this visit, high school cliques, that would not even look at each other in the halls of the high school, sat down side by side and tied flies and ate together, and helped each other... and we learned. It was an experience like no other, and I am sure that every student that participated in that trip remembers what we learned there and has fond memories of the NJ State School of Conservation.

I understand that Montclair University has once again expressed interest in managing NJSOC. I strongly believe that there is no other entity more qualified and deserving to take over the reins of NJSOC than The Friends of NJSOC. The results of the engineering study conducted by the Friends alone bears witness to mismanagement the School suffered at the hands of Montclair. I don't believe that they should be allowed a second chance and agree that the School needs a manager with no other competing priorities. The Friends have dedicated themselves to forming partnerships that will jointly support the programming and the financial needs of the New Jersey School of Conservation and will lead to the self-sufficiency of NJSOC. They are dedicated to its success, and as they have already shown in just two short years, by saving the school,

reopening it, running programs and securing a \$1,000,000 grant, after Montclair University turned its back and walked away on what they deemed a financial burden, they will not let it fail.

I am proud that NJ is home to this unique school to teach our residents how to protect the environment. The school holds an important place in the development of the environmental education movement worldwide, as well as a place in the hearts of all the people its programs have touched. I urge you to support Senate Bill S438 and let the Friends bring the New Jersey School of Conservation, the nation's oldest and largest resident environmental education center, as well as the third largest environmental field center in the entire world, back to its full potential as a leader in environmental education worldwide. No other group is more dedicated or deserving to assume this important role. Please support Senate Bill S438.

Sincerely,

Torrie Sakalsky