

February 16, 2022

RE: LD 906: An Act to Provide Passamaquoddy Tribal Members Access to Clean Drinking Water

To Senator Carney, Representative Harnett and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Thank you for this opportunity to **testify in support of LD 906: An Act to Provide Passamaquoddy Tribal Members Access to Clean Drinking Water.**

I am Anne D. (Andy) Burt, of Edgecomb. I am a member of the Friends (Quakers) Committee on Maine Public Policy, but I am speaking today for myself.

Access to clean drinking water is something most of us take for granted. We turn on our tap, and whether the water comes from a personal well or a community water system, we expect that it is safe to drink, and cook and bathe in. This may be true for most people living in Maine, but has not been true for Passamaquoddy tribal members living at Sipayik for decades.

I first learned about the unsafe water problem a few months ago talking to a young Passamaquoddy tribal member who shared her story growing up unable to ever drink or bathe in water coming from the tap. She told me about an early experience visiting a school friend who lived off the reservation. When her friend filled a glass of water from her kitchen faucet and started to drink, my acquaintance shrieked "Don't drink that". She had always been told by her mother and aunties, who had been told by their mothers and aunties, that water from the faucet was unsafe to use. She had assumed this was true for everyone. She then shared the many efforts the tribe has made over the years to secure a clean water source for everyone and the barriers they have faced to resolve the problem.

There are short-term solutions, which passage of LD 906, introduced by Passamaquoddy tribal Representative Rena Newell, would make a difference in the community water system. For example, if the Passamaquoddy Water District, the only public water district in the state that pays property taxes (such injustice!), were exempted from those taxes, some funding could be freed up for water system upgrades.

But we know, from hours of testimony on LD 1626 just two days ago, that passing that comprehensive bill, which includes the recommendations brought to you by your peers and tribal leaders after many hours of consultation and heart-felt dialogue, would truly open the door for the Passamaquoddy tribe and other Wabanaki people to have access to the resources and opportunities that 570 other federally recognized tribes in the US enjoy. And to create a permanent solution to access clean water for the Passamaquoddy tribe at Sipayik.

It is time to lift the knee of the state off the neck of our Wabanaki neighbors and allow them to breathe and for us to work side by side, nation to nation, for the good of all people in Maine. It is the morally right and just thing to do. And the time is now.

I ask you to support LD 906 to assure the Passamaquoddy people can move forward to access clean water. And I again ask you to support LD 1626 to recognize and respect the full sovereignty of all Wabanaki people that will allow them to determine their future.

Thank you for your time and your service to the State of Maine.

Anne D. Burt
Edgecomb
LD 906

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