



To: Judiciary Committee

From: Maine Youth for Climate Justice

Date: March 7th, 2023

Re: Testimony in favor of LD 78: Resolution, Proposing An Amendment To Article X Of The Constitution Of Maine Regarding The Publication Of Maine Indian Treaty Obligations

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Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Judiciary Committee, our names are Laura Bither, Ezra Sassaman, and Isabelle Rogers. We are writing as representatives for Maine Youth for Climate Justice (MYCJ), a coalition of over 450 youth from across the state who fight for bold climate action and a just transition to a livable future in Maine. We are writing in favor of LD 78.

*Laura:* At the core of our work is climate justice; we acknowledge the climate crisis is caused by systemic failures and forms of oppression, and disproportionately impacts marginalized communities. Colonialism is at the root of climate change, so when combating the climate crisis, we need to simultaneously address colonial structures and the environmental injustices they have caused.

Among the most destructive tendencies of colonization is the erasure of the rights of Indigenous people. In the context of Maine, beginning to undo the harms of colonization requires identifying laws, cultural norms, and other practices that no longer hold up to today's moral understanding of social justice. Failing to print Maine's obligation towards the Wabanaki tribes in the state's constitution is among those outdated and unacceptable practices.

*Ezra:* When Maine became a state independent from Massachusetts, it accepted "all the duties and obligations of this Commonwealth, towards the Indians within said District of Maine, whether the same arise from treaties, or otherwise." (Article X, Section V) Unfortunately, Maine's 34th governor, Nathan Dingley, recommended the creation of a group to amend Maine Constitution in 1875. Among other changes, this group recommended Sections 1, 2 and 5 of Article X be omitted in any printed copies of Maine's constitution.

*Isabelle:* In this way, the actions of a single governor in 1875 have obscured Maine's obligations to the Wabanaki tribes for over 140 years. A single person with a worldview informed by 19th century beliefs, however, no longer represents the people of Maine in 2023 – people who overwhelmingly support the rights of Wabanaki tribal citizens. We need to amend our state's constitution to reflect this change.

For the above reasons, our coalition, Maine Youth for Climate Justice, urges you to vote ought-to-pass on LD 78. Thank you.

Laura Bither, JustME for JustUS, MYCJ Core Member

Ezra Sassaman, MYCJ Advocacy and Organizing Coordinator

Isabelle Rogers, Sunrise Franklin County, Maine Climate Action NOW!, MYCJ Core Member