



Testimony In Support of LD 78, “RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to Article X of the Constitution of Maine Regarding the Publication of Maine Indian Treaty Obligations”  
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary  
March 7, 2022

Hello, Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. Please accept this testimony on behalf of Defend Our Health in support of LD 78, “RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to Article X of the Constitution of Maine Regarding the Publication of Maine Indian Treaty Obligations”.

Defend Our Health is a Maine-based non-profit that works to make sure that everyone has equal access to safe food, safe drinking water, healthy homes, and toxic-free, climate-friendly products. We thank Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross for putting forth this resolution as well as Senator Rick Bennett who submitted LD 578 which was intended to do the same thing.

LD 78 would amend the Maine Constitution to require that the text of Article X, Section 5 of the Constitution be included in any printed copies of the Constitution. Section 5 describes Maine’s treaty obligations to the tribes of Maine that were established when Maine became independent from Massachusetts. The language was removed in 1876 supposedly to make the document more accessible.

A functioning democracy requires transparency. Citizens have the right to the entirety of public documents, particularly the Constitution which lays out the laws and obligations of both the government and its citizens. No part of our state Constitution should be hidden. And, in this instance, keeping this language hidden sends a message that the state’s relationship with the tribes is unimportant. Passing this resolution would be a positive step forward in the state’s relationship with the tribes. We urge the committee to vote unanimously “ought to pass” on LD 78.

Thank you.