

Laura Bither
JustME for JustUS
LD 928

March 19, 2023

To: Senator Stacy Brenner, Representative Lori Gramlich, and Honorable members of the committee

From: Laura Bither

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 928, a Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish a Right to a Healthy Environment

My name is Laura Bither and I live in Freeport. I am also the Director of JustME for JustUS, a youth-led organization advancing youth climate justice and civic engagement work in rural Maine. I am writing as a young person to urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 928.

I grew up in Maine, and I am among the minority of young people who came back to Maine in my early 20s after leaving. I have been so grateful to have the opportunity to lead community work in my home state. I believe so strongly in Mainers, and I have an enormous sense of pride for all the work that is being done in the state that ensures that people will have their rights protected. Especially considering rural Maine, there is a need to explicitly center the needs of all Mainers in conversations about the climate and the policies that protect it. We need to ensure that we are protecting Maine’s truly special environment, but also all people who live here.

We need LD 928 to protect Mainers and our home for the future. Right now, we do not have guaranteed access to clean air, clean water, and a healthy environment. These are crucial for the state to remain a valued place to live.

Rural Maine is constantly under threat from outside developers who come in to profit off of our resources while causing harm to local communities’ health and economies. There are mineral and rare earth deposits throughout the state, and abandoned mines are some of the largest superfund sites in the state. New proposed mines have the potential to hurt more of our rural communities.

We need environmental, health, and human rights to be protected in the constitution so that these can’t change from one administration to the next. The health of Maine and Mainers should not be a political issue.

I am so proud to live in Maine, and that is because of our dedication to protecting our people. As climate change continues to cause more disparities in health and economy, Maine will find itself at a crucial place. Either we ensure protections now to work toward a more just, sustainable future for generations of young Mainers, or we are forced to scramble later on after undue harm has been caused. I urge you to vote “ought to pass” as the hopeful, community-driven elected officials supporting the best interests of everyday Mainers.

Respectfully submitted,
Laura Bither