

March 20, 2023

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

From: Jason Anthony

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 Jason Anthony and I live in the village of Round Pond, in Bristol. I was born in Boothbay. I am an outdoorsman and hunter, a writer (Maine's 2014 Literary Fellow), a former teacher, and a concerned citizen. I am writing to urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 928.

One of the reasons I love Maine is that everyone here, regardless of politics, respects the state's wild natural beauty. It's past time that the Maine Constitution reflected that common respect. The Pine Tree Amendment provides that opportunity.

The Maine economy, from fishing and hunting to tourism, relies on a healthy environment. The Pine Tree Amendment is a bipartisan solution to protect the right to clean air and water for future Maine generations.

Safeguarding a healthy Maine environment is essential for Maine's future economy. Maine is likely to see rapid population growth this century as climate-intensified droughts, fires, flooding, and sea-level rise make life less hospitable elsewhere in the U.S., particularly in the South and Southwest. Good constitutional protections will prepare the state for that future.

As the world changes, and as Maine changes, we need a constitutional guardrail to ensure state government considers the future of business and the rights of citizens as it decides whether to issue permits that may sacrifice the quality of our air, water, and farmland.

Two states, Pennsylvania and Montana, have had similar constitutional amendments for fifty years. (New York has recently joined the club too.) These amendments have been used only in cases where the state had issued permits or passed laws that amounted to serious violations of the public trust. In PA, for example, the state tried to ban towns from putting limits on fracking. Here in Maine, the PTA will provide guidance that ensures government decision-making considers environmental impacts early in the process when prevention of pollution, degradation and environmental harm is most possible.

The Pine Tree Amendment is the finest kind of legislative opportunity. It is a values-based precautionary approach to protecting what all the people of Maine hold dear: the place we call home. Please, vote "ought to pass" on LD 928.

Respectfully submitted,
Jason Anthony