

Scarlet Labbé-Watson
Watershed School
LD 928

March 20, 2023

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

From: Scarlet Labbé-Watson

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 Scarlet Labbé-Watson and I go to school at Watershed School.

I am writing as a student to urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 928.

I care deeply about this issue as an upcoming voter and youth. I want to live in a place where I know I will have my basic needs met. Everyone needs clean water to survive, and because of that it should be protected by law. If people do not have a clean environment they will have more health struggles, and fear (because they aren't sure if they will be poisoned by the air they breathe or water they drink).

Our right to a clean and healthy environment should be as fundamental as our right to vote. Our state is defined by our extraordinary environment - it is who we are and what we value, as individuals and as a state. Protecting the health of our waters, air, land and wildlife is essential to our future well-being and prosperity.

The PTA will strengthen environmental justice by ensuring all communities – regardless of race, ethnicity or income – have the same rights to clean water and air and healthy environments and the duty of all government officials to protect all communities equitably. Pennsylvania, Montana and most recently New York have already passed this kind of environmental amendment. PA & MT amendments are being used to prevent harmful gold mining operations; advance drinking water protections from PFAS contamination; prevent state legislators from raiding environmental protection funds; require consideration of science and impacts before permitting environmentally damaging operations; secure cleanup of toxic contamination, and more.

Last year my families' tap water began to run red with sediment. We didn't understand what was going on or how to fix it. It was terrifying to know that I couldn't drink the water I was provided with. After an expensive water test we found we had high levels of Coliform in our well water and that we needed to shock our well with bleach to get rid of it. In the meantime we needed to walk to our neighbors everytime we wanted water. We were very lucky that we have such a generous community but many people who cannot drink their well water are not so lucky and are forced to buy overpriced water from monopolies to get their basic needs met. After not one, but two shocks of bleach and over six months of undrinkable water we could have our tap water again. Needing to carry three gallons of water from my neighbors gave me an important perspective on how important that resource is. It is both essential and fragile. There are people in more extreme situations than my family and it is everyone's responsibility to make sure they are taken care of. Protecting these resources cannot wait, contamination and depletion of resources is already happening and can have dire consequences!

Respectfully submitted,
Scarlet Labbé-Watson