

March 21, 2023

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

From: Zak Kendall

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 Zak Kendall and I live in New Sharon, Maine. I am writing as a member of Maine Youth for Climate Justice, a coalition of over 400 youth in Maine, fighting for bold climate action, to urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 928.

I'm sitting on the front step of my little sap house, just off the side of a dirt road, nestled in a grove of maple trees. This is my favorite season in Maine; the sound of sap hitting a metal bucket and the smell of sweetness in the air. The first nutrients of the year, after a long winter, bring tremendous gratitude, not only for me but for the wildlife as well. With the steam rolling off the pans and the crackle of the fire below them, it's hard not to love life here in Maine.

I feel especially grateful this spring, because just a month ago I found myself driving through Ohio following the train derailment in East Palestine. When I found out we would be driving through the state I hastily googled searched what that would mean for my health. Would I be ok breathing air in Ohio? Or drinking water while there?

That is why enacting the pine tree amendment is crucial here in Maine. Because I, as a Maine Youth, want to feel grateful that I am ensured access to a clean environment. An environment that will nourish me in the spring with the run of sap rather than leave me in fear of what's in my water, my air, or god forbid, my maple syrup.

Today I'm speaking out not only on my behalf but also as a member of Maine Youth for Climate Justice (MYCJ). Our organization represents youth all over the state of Maine; youth that are fighting for a healthy and safe future. We believe enacting the Pine Tree Amendment is essential in that fight. As Maine youth, we're seeing the impact that things like PFAS are having on the people of our state. It's hard to imagine what that means for our future. Will we buy homes here in Maine only to find out the water is contaminated with forever chemicals? What will we do then? The Pine Tree amendment will ensure that our right to clean water is protected as we become the new generation of Maine.

I'm 27 years old and have lived all of my life here in Maine. I grew up along the Sandy River in western, Maine, I've hiked Mount Katahdin every summer since I was a kid, I went to college in Acadia National Park, and I worked as a Whitewater Guide on the Kennebec river. The uniquely beautiful Maine coast, lakes, and woods impact every aspect of our lives and are part of who we are. Protecting our air, our water, and our environment, is just like protecting our hands, our heads, and our hearts. It's essential to everything. So please vote to enact the Pine Tree Amendment, for me and all the other youth in Maine. Your children and grandchildren will thank you!

Respectfully submitted,
Zak Kendall