

Joseph Walsh
Portland
LD 928

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, members of the committee, my name is Joe Walsh. I'm a resident of Portland and a business founder and owner, currently employing 37 people and growing. I'm here to testify in support of LD 928.

When the state constitution was written in 1819, we didn't have to think much about access to clean air and water, or about depleting natural resources. If we lived in that time, we could look at our northern forests, or the fish in our rivers and bays and think "there's no end!". In 2023, things have changed.

We know that there are not infinite fish to catch or infinite trees to cut down. We also know that the soil on our farms can become polluted with invisible chemicals, ruining farm businesses, causing health problems and burdening us all with costly cleanup.

We can no longer take clean air, clean water and abundant natural resources for granted. If we want to enjoy the abundance our state has offered the generations before us, we must steward these resources, and ensure that protecting our air and water go hand in hand with growing our economy and providing opportunity for our children and grandchildren.

With this amendment in place, we ensure not only that Maine preserves its status as a vacation destination known for its natural beauty, but also a destination for a new generation of business owners, professionals and tradespeople who want to live here and build our economy because this is such a beautiful, healthy place to live.

As a business owner, I understand the concerns about creating additional regulations. I believe there are legitimate and important debates to have about how best to ensure we protect our natural resources. By supporting this amendment, we are not advocating for one or the other regulation. In fact, I believe there is an opportunity to streamline and simplify our environmental regulations while making them more effective. But that's not what this bill is about. This bill is about ensuring that all Maine people have equal access to an unspoiled environment so we can continue to enjoy it for generations to come.

For me, LD 928 really is about my son. He's 5, and he's learning to ski, fish, hike and be a great first mate out on Casco Bay and Rangeley Lake. I want him to grow and thrive in this state, and for his kids to do the same. I want for him what every parent wants for their kids – to be happy, healthy and do something good with his life. I believe that to do that, he needs clean air to breathe, clean water to drink and a healthy, clean environment to enjoy, and share with his children.

It's time to let the people vote on the Pine Tree Amendment, to allow us the chance to update our constitution to meet the needs of today, and to ensure our children can thrive in the future.

Thank you for your time, I hope you'll support this bill.