



Solutions for a
Toxic-Free Tomorrow

Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Director of Advocacy, Defend Our Health
In Support of LD 928, "RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to
Establish a Right to a Clean and Healthy Environment"
Before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee
March 22, 2023

Good morning Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the director of advocacy for Defend Our Health. Defend Our Health's mission is to make sure that everyone has equal access to safe food and drinking water, healthy homes and products that are toxic-free and climate friendly. I am here to testify in support of LD 928, "RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish a Right to a Clean and Healthy Environment."

LD 928 would enshrine in our constitution the right of all Mainers to have clean environment. Maine is known as vacationland because of our beautiful beaches, lakes, and mountains. Our identity and economic success are tied to our natural environment. Farmers, fishermen, foresters, and tourism businesses depend on a healthy environment to prosper. All Mainers are entitled to clean air, clean water, and a healthy environment for work and recreation and LD 928 would enshrine those rights in our constitution. While state policymakers work hard to make sure that they are protecting these basic rights, there is currently no foundational principle to guide state policymakers at every level of government in their deliberations to protect these basic essentials. LD 928 would change that.

Maine is currently dealing with a PFAS contamination crisis. The legislature has worked hard over the past four years to put into place laws to protect the health of all Mainers from PFAS contamination going forward by passing source reduction legislation, halting state-sanction programs that contributed to farmland contamination, and providing resources to impacted communities. Passage of LD 928 would make it easier for impacted communities to act on issues like PFAS, without having to wait for legislative action, which isn't always guaranteed. For instance, Pennsylvania used their Green Amendment, which is their version of LD 928 to submit a legal petition arguing that the state's inaction on PFAS in drinking water was in violation of the Green Amendment. Ultimately, their governor used language under the Green Amendment to move on water standards for PFAS in drinking water. Pennsylvania set PFAS drinking water standards, citing their constitutional obligation to do so under the Green Amendment. If LD 928 had been in place, it may have allowed movement on PFAS contamination sooner. It could be used in the future to help push for action on other sources of contamination.

LD 928 would provide guidance to lawmakers and state agencies and ensure that our laws and regulations are interpreted, applied, and enforced in service to that constitutional obligation, assuring government accountability. Therefore, Defend Our Health urges you to vote unanimously "ought to pass" on LD 928.

Thank you for your time.