



Solutions for a
Toxic-Free Tomorrow

Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Vice President of Policy and Advocacy, Defend Our Health
In Support of LD 14, "An Act to Provide Indigenous Peoples Free Access to State Parks"
Before the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee
March 11, 2025

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the Vice President of Policy and 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 14, "An Act to Provide Indigenous Peoples Free Access to State Parks".

Defend Our Health stands in solidarity with the Wabanaki people. Maine's indigenous communities are an integral part of the fabric of life here in Maine. The Wabanaki peoples historic and cultural connection to the land cannot be overstated. The displacement of the Wabanaki and theft of their land has disrupted that connection. They are the original stewards of the land and as such, should be given every opportunity to visit and engage with culturally significant lands without any financial barriers.

Maine will not be the only state that has taken action to allow its indigenous community free access to state parks. In 2022, Minnesota passed similar legislation to allow its 11 federally recognized tribes free access to state parks. In Minnesota it has had a very small fiscal impact on the state parks, around \$25000 a year¹.

Maine has much work to do when it comes to healing the deep wounds that European settlers and the state itself have inflicted upon the Wabanaki people. Allowing them free access to state parks is a tiny but significant step that can be taken to help the Wabanaki people connect with their ancestral lands. We urge the committee to vote "ought to pass" on LD 14.

¹ Orenstein, W. (2024, February 8). *Starting in 2022, tribal members will get free permits to Minnesota state parks.* Starting in 2022, Tribal Members will get Free Permits to Minnesota State Parks. <https://www.minnpost.com/greater-minnesota/2021/09/starting-in-2022-tribal-members-will-get-free-permits-to-minnesota-state-parks/#:~:text=This%20proposal%20would%20provide%20a,and%20active%20duty%20military%20personnel.>