

Date: March 21, 2023

To: Environment & Natural Resources Committee

From: Cole Cochrane, Maine Youth Action

Re: Testimony in support of LD 928, Resolution, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish a Right to a Clean and Healthy Environment



Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and the honorable members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Cole Cochrane, I am a senior at Thornton Academy in Saco, and I am here on behalf of Maine Youth Action, a statewide youth advocacy group that represents hundreds of young Mainers from various backgrounds. I have come to testify in support of LD 928, a Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish a Right to a Clean and Healthy Environment.

As a state, we cherish the prestige and awe of our natural environment. I do not know a single person that lives here that does not take pride in our forests, our rivers, and our mountains. I know all of you on the committee today can resonate with the significance Maine's environment has on our lives. However, what we hold dear in our hearts is on the line. Our environment faces imminent threats to its health and integrity. Issues such as pollution, rising emissions, and encroaching development poses dangers to the health of our ecosystems. They also have severe effects on the public's health, and jeopardizes the sustainability of our communities. What I find most concerning, however, is that these problems we are experiencing now will exacerbate over time. I am certainly not the first person to tell you this, but climate change is an existential threat to our future and future generations. And as part of that future generation, I feel a responsibility to tell the people making decisions today that we need to think transformatively when it comes to our climate action. We have done excellent work over the past few years, but I am old enough to have seen the swings of politics and I find it imperative that we have a measure that protects the basics of environmental rights, as well as something that can last for future generations regardless of who holds office. This is why I see the Pine Tree Amendment as a crucial piece of

legislation. By adding in only a couple sentences into our constitution, we empower Mainers and their communities to protect what they hold dear. We can preserve the health of our ecosystems, promote sustainability, and hold those accountable that endanger it. As a youth advocate, I find it to be critical for my generation to have the Pine Tree Amendment as a tool in order to support our efforts in environmental rights and protection. I hope you may consider the voice of the youth during this process and I respectfully urge the committee to vote “ought to pass” on LD 928. I thank you for your time and service.