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**THE MAINE SENATE**  
131st Legislature

**Testimony of Senator Richard Bennett**  
**before the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources**  
LD 928 "RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish a Right to a Clean and Healthy Environment"  
March 22, 2023

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources: I am Senator Rick Bennett of Oxford, and I have the honor of serving 14 communities in Western Maine in the State Senate. I am pleased to cosponsor LD 928, "RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish a Right to a Clean and Healthy Environment"—also known as the Pine Tree Amendment.

The proposed Amendment is predicated on the fact that a core condition of human life and core to our state's identity is a healthy environment and a clean outdoors. This Amendment will hold our government accountable to protect these as basic rights.

The Pine Tree Amendment would be added to Article I., the Declaration of Rights in the Maine Constitution. This enumeration of rights therefore precedes the mechanisms and applications of governmental powers, the checks and balances, the legal definitions which follow. Indeed, the expression of these rights foremost in our founding document is designed as a limitation on the governmental power that is thereafter constructed.

The Declaration of Rights are the bedrock principles and legal protections that you can expect if you live in Maine. The Pine Tree Amendment fits comfortably and contentedly in this context. What commonality is more important for Mainers than our bountiful, beautiful outdoors – the clean winds of Katahdin, the lapping waves of Sebago, the bends of coastal shoreline? What says Maine more than cross-country skiing on a crisp March morning, dipping your paddle in Chesuncook Lake, feeling the earth awaken around your tree stand in November, traversing the boulders of Mahoosuc Notch, or hearing the buoy bell at eventide?

Our way of life in Maine demands recognition and protection as a right of the people. Sadly, our government has shown that it cannot always be trusted. Sometimes its policies are swayed unduly by centers of influence, such as globe-straddling corporations that may think of Maine as a market, as a means to an end, rather than as the unique place it is, where there is a special interconnectedness between the people and the lands and waters on which we live, play, work, and find sustenance. Thus, the Pine Tree Amendment will help safeguard the harmonizing elements of our way of life, our shared values and our common culture.

I ask for your favorable consideration and thank you for your attention.