

## Testimony in Support of LD 928, a Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish a Right to a Healthy Environment

March 22, 2023

To: Senator Stacy Brenner (chair), Representative Lori Gramlich (chair), and distinguished Members of the Joint Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources

Good morning Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources.

My name is Andy (Anne D.) Burt and I live in Edgecomb. I am speaking today as a decades-long Maine activist for social and environmental justice. For nearly three years I have been a volunteer member of the Pine Tree Amendment's intergenerational team, encouraged that enshrining environmental rights into Maine's Constitution could protect our best, science-based environmental laws and regulations and preserve healthy ecosystems, essential for life, now and into the future. As a grandparent eager to leave behind a healthy planet for my grandchildren and all living beings, I **strongly urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 928.**

For the past week I have been reflecting on the powerful messages delivered in the House Chamber by Wabanaki chiefs and other dignitaries. They took us back more than 10,000 years to meet their ancestors and recent relatives who have cared for the land and waters we know as Maine. Their ancestors understood this as a sacred obligation to preserve life for future generations. They passed the wisdom down through generations to Wabanaki people who continue to steward the land and waters, at times in collaboration with some of their non-Native neighbors. Today I am feeling gratitude to them as we and so many visitors enjoy recreating, making our livelihoods, and finding spiritual refreshment in the forests, fields, and waters they cared for.

So now I turn to today and the future and ask: How might we incorporate into our system of laws and regulations that Indigenous wisdom that could guide our actions to preserve a healthy environment for seven generations or more into the future? How can we assure that all people in Maine, including future generations, will have clean air to breathe, clean water to drink and bathe in, and healthy ecosystems? I believe that the Pine Tree Amendment would offer that assurance and be a tool to guide decision-making at every level of government from municipalities to the state's legislature, public agencies and administration. Policymakers, like you, take an oath of office to uphold the Constitution. With this amendment enshrined in the Constitution, policymakers would be obligated to consider whether a project or proposed law or regulation would violate the environmental rights of Maine people and, using the best science and information available, assess what impacts their policy decisions might have on the future health of our environment.

As we face growing threats to our environmental and public health, I believe we need a paradigm shift in our thinking about how we protect our air, water and ecosystems for today and into a future we won't know. Something foundational we can stand on. Having learned over the past years how environmental rights amendments have been working successfully in three other states, I am eager for Maine to follow suit. I would like to think that our descendants, living in a healthy environment here, will look back and be grateful to this legislature and the people of Maine for voting to enshrine the Pine Tree Amendment into Maine's Declaration of Rights.

I ask you to make history and vote **ought to pass** on LD 928.

Thank you for considering my testimony and your service to the people of Maine

Respectfully submitted,

Anne D. Burt  
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