

To: Joint Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry

From: Becca Ferguson

Date: March 18, 2021

Re: Testimony in support of LD 471 **An Act To Require Legislative Approval for Certain Leases of Public Lands**

Senator Dill, Representative O'Neil, and Members of the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, my name is Becca Ferguson and I am a youth climate activist in Portland and member of Maine Youth for Climate Justice. I am writing in support of L.D. 471, An Act To Require Legislative Approval for Certain Leases of Public Lands.

Like many young people I was drawn to Maine by the variety and expanse of public lands this state has to offer. I am an avid hiker, skier, runner, biker, backpacker, and general outdoor enthusiast. Although I've traveled the country and visited both national and state parks in many other parts of the US, I strongly believe that Maine is home to the most beautiful and easily accessible public lands.

The majority of Mainer's share my love for these public lands. In 1993, more than 72% of Mainers voted to amend the Constitution (Article IX, Section 23) in order to protect public lands from projects that would reduce or substantially alter these lands by requiring the vote of 2/3 of all the members elected to each House. Despite this, in 2014, the Bureau of Parks and Lands issued a lease for the CMP Corridor and amended it in 2015 and 2020, both times without any public notice or vote.

The CMP project would cut a vast corridor through public lands and poses a serious threat to wetlands, wildlife habitats, and endangered species. The permits for a project of this scale should have received that scrutiny of the public, and it is inexcusable for the BPL to allow a project like this to pass without the input of Mainers. Furthermore, this project puts Maine's recreation and tourism industries at risk, which make up a large percentage of Maine's economy.

This bill will properly restore power to the people and give us the opportunity to stand up and defend Maine public lands from projects like the CMP Corridor that threaten to cause irreparable harm. I urge you to vote ought-to-pass on LD 471 to protect our right to vote and keep Maine's public lands pristine and beautiful for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration.

Becca Ferguson