

To: Joint Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry

From: Julia St.Clair-Voiers

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 Julia St.Clair-Voiers, I am an organizer with Maine Youth for Climate Justice and resident of South Portland. I am writing today in support of LD 471, An Act to Require Legislative Approval for Certain Leases of Public Lands.

Maine is known for its unique landscapes with seemingly endless opportunities for recreation and Maine's people have a longstanding and deep rooted appreciation for public lands. In November 1993, more than 72% of Maine voters voted to amend the state Constitution in order to protect public lands. LD 471 would clarify this existing constitutional right which requires a two-thirds majority vote to approve any substantial alteration of lands held by the state. This bill would ensure that certain types of leases on public lands get a two-thirds vote in the legislature, and create a safety net to protect Maine's public lands.

The Central Maine Power (CMP) Corridor is one such project that threatens to harm Maine's public lands. The corridor project, which a majority of Mainers oppose, was approved by the Bureau of Parks and Lands (BPL) without public input or notice. The undemocratic process has allowed for this project that will have detrimental impacts on the environment, including wetlands, waterways, and the largest tract of continuous forest in the United States east of the Mississippi River, as well as economic repercussions for Maine's outdoor and recreation industries.

LD 471 is about strengthening democratic processes and allowing Maine constituents and their representatives to have more of a say in the uses of public lands. Public lands belong to the people of Maine and should not be leased for private benefit without allowing for input and proper process. Instead of allowing the BPL to make decisions around public lands without constituent accountability, elected officials would have the capacity to make decisions on behalf of their constituency, allowing for the people to have a stronger voice in decisions around public lands.

As a young person, I care deeply about the future of this state and protecting and conserving Maine's public lands for all future generations. It is critical that Mainers are given more say in the preservation of public lands. For these reasons, I urge you to vote "ought-to-pass" on the LD 471.

Thank you for your consideration,

Julia St.Clair-Voiers