



Maine Conservation Voters
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**Testimony of Maine Conservation Voters
IN SUPPORT OF
“An Act to Include a Tribal Member in the Baxter State Park Authority”
Before the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry
February 13th, 2023**

Good Morning Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker and members of the Committee On Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. My name is Maureen Drouin and I am Executive Director of Maine Conservation Voters, a nonprofit organization with over 13,000 members and supporters committed to protecting our environment, democracy, and climate future.

I am pleased to speak to you this morning in support of LD 294, “An Act to Include a Tribal Member in the Baxter State Park Authority.”

Governor Percival Baxter was a visionary. He used his vast wealth, connections, perseverance, and creativity to ensure that Maine people would always know and have access to our shared wilderness heritage through Baxter State Park.

But like many conservationists, including those with the best of intentions, Gov. Baxter did not recognize or take into consideration the sacred relationship between the Wabanaki tribes and this land. This resulted in the exclusion of the tribes in the creation of the park and the structures that now manage it.

The Baxter State Park Authority is the clearest example, but there is little to no representation from the tribes that I could see on the various Advisory Committees either.

We are the lesser for it. While the three members of the Authority provide invaluable information on forest land management, the management of fish and game, and knowledge of the law, the lack of Wabanaki representation has meant that for close to 100 years now, we have not benefited from the wisdom and connection of the native

people whose roots have been in Mount Katahdin, Pamola Peak, and the surrounding landscape for millenia.

Conservation is my organization's middle name and I'm proud of the many lands and waters collectively that we've been able to protect. But it's time that we acknowledge the exclusion of indigenous people in the systems we've built around conservation and start repairing them.

This bill does not change the deeds of trust nor does it change the purpose of the Baxter State Park Authority. This bill is about adding a voice that should have been included long before today. Adding a member from the Wabanaki Nations would bring to the Authority more ancestral knowledge and connection than any state official could provide.

There is no more meaningful way for the Wabanaki to be involved in the management of Baxter State Park than to have a seat at the table where the ultimate decisions are made. For these reasons, Maine Conservation Voters respectfully urges you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 294.

Thank you.