



Testimony In Support of LD 294, “An Act to Include a Tribal Member in the Baxter State Park Authority”
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
February 13, 2023

Hello, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. Please accept this testimony on behalf of Defend Our Health in support of LD 294, “An Act to Include a Tribal Member in the Baxter State Park Authority”.

Defend Our Health is a Maine-based non-profit that works to make sure that everyone has equal access to safe food, safe drinking water, healthy homes, and toxic-free, climate-friendly products. While we don't normally testify on issues of land management, we feel strongly that the Wabanaki people should be included in the operation and management of their ancestral lands.

We recognize that Baxter State Park is not part of the state parks system but rather an entity set up according to a trust created by then Governor Percival Baxter. We also recognize that the trust has very specific rules about who oversees the administration of the park. These rules were set up to protect the park and to help it remain “simple and natural” and to prevent the government and outside interests from interfering with the management of the park. While we appreciate the arguments that legislative interference could create precedent for future interference in park management, at the end of the day Baxter State Park is located on the ancestral lands of the Wabanaki people. They have been stewards of this land for thousands of years before white settlers arrived and before the creation of the Baxter State Park Authority. They have lived in harmony with the land and water, managing natural resources so that future generations can thrive. Katadhin is sacred to the Penobscot Nation. The Wabanaki people, more than anyone else, have a right to be included in the management of Baxter State Park. Therefore, we urge the committee to unanimously vote “ought to pass” on LD 294

Thank you.