

Anne D. Burt
Edgecomb

Testimony in Support of LD 489

March 8, 2021

To The Honorable Senator Stacy Brenner (chair) and Honorable Representative Ralph Tucker (chair), and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources:

Good morning Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources.

I'm Andy Burt and I live in Edgecomb. I'm a retired environmental program director who is now engaged in producing films about Maine people, their environmental concerns and solutions. I am here to testify in support of LD 489, an amendment that would enshrine into the Maine Constitution... environmental rights for all people in Maine, including future generations.

Here's why I feel compelled to speak...

Twenty-one years ago, our first grandchild was born 3 months prematurely. We drove through the night from Maine to meet Kelsey, who, in my husband's words, was the size of a red squirrel. This tiny girl, you could practically hold in one hand, was struggling for life. As I gently touched this little miracle, I promised her that I would do everything that I could to assure that there would be a healthy environment to support her life and generations to come.

And I have tried to keep that promise.

Over 20 years, primarily working for environmental justice with the Maine Council of Churches, I have developed and carried out educational programs and I have advocated for public policy on a broad range of issues including solar energy and energy efficiency, upgraded fresh water quality standards, and dam removal to open historic runs for alewives on the St. Croix River.

Over those years I have also learned that laws, rules and regulations come and go as new legislatures and governors take office. I have watched my efforts overturned and then reintroduced a few years later. Frankly it has felt a bit like the Greek story of Sisyphus who rolled a boulder up a hill only for it to roll back down. The process continued into eternity.

As a result of my experiences, I've come to believe we need a paradigm shift in our thinking about how we equitably protect our air, water and ecosystems for today and into a future we won't know.... Something foundational we can stand on. Wrongfully I assumed we had guaranteed rights to these basic ingredients for life. Having learned in the last year how environmental rights amendments have been working successfully in the two states that have them in their constitutions, PA and MT, I am eager for Maine to follow suit.

As we rebuild from COVID's devastating consequences to our health and economy and face certain impacts from accelerating climate change, this constitutional amendment would provide a guiding light for our elected leaders like you to turn to as you steward Maine's resources for a resilient future for all, including future generations. By working for and strongly supporting this amendment, I feel I am taking a big step in fulfilling my promise to Kelsey, now a college junior.

For all people in Maine and those yet to come, I ask you to make history and vote ought to pass on LD 486.

Respectfully submitted,

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