



March 8, 2021

Good morning Chair Brenner, Chair Tucker, and Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

The Surfrider Foundation has been working to protect America's coasts for over 36 years; we have more than 170 chapters and youth clubs across the coastal U.S. and Great Lakes that are supported by a staff of about 60 experts. Our members here in Maine are beachgoers, surfers, kayakers, sun tanners and the like –we are beach users. Our common point of interest is a vision for healthy ocean and coastal ecosystems, and a motivation to volunteer to protect our state's ocean waters, waves, and beaches through a focus on beach access, clean water, climate change, coastal preservation, environmental justice, ocean protection, and plastic pollution mitigation. We **submit this testimony in support of LD489**, a resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of Maine to establish a right to a healthy environment.

The Surfrider Foundation is committed to fostering a just, equitable, diverse, and inclusive organization for all people who protect and enjoy the world's ocean, waves, and beaches. Our success and impact depend on learning from our community, standing in solidarity with our allies and working toward a more just future, both for our organization and the environmental movement as a whole.

The Surfrider Foundation has focused since its inception on grassroots organizing in communities across the U.S. to ensure that everyone who loves the ocean has a voice when it comes to protecting and enjoying our coasts. A core tenet of our work has been to ensure the ocean, waves, and beaches are safe and accessible to all people.

We additionally incorporate justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion into the DNA of the Surfrider Foundation by using the equity and empowerment lens as a transformative tool to improve the quality of our planning, decision-making, and resource allocation, leading to more inclusive



policies, procedures, programs and activities. LD489 provides Maine with an avenue to also apply this tool, advancing environmental justice for all Mainers.

Our Maine State Constitution guarantees fundamental democratic rights. Indeed, to preserve and protect the integrity of the inalienable rights afforded by our State Constitution, extreme caution must be used when considering recommendations for any changes; we must ensure any changes accommodate the interests and rights of all Mainers.

The Surfrider Foundation Maine Chapter asserts that codifying a right to clean and healthy environment, including pure water, clean air and healthy ecosystems, and the preservation of the natural, cultural, recreational, scenic, and healthful qualities of the environment, as prescribed in LD489, would enhance and safeguard the fundamental rights of all Maine citizens.

Mandating that the State may not infringe upon these rights by action or inaction or through the action of others by requiring that the State conserve, protect, and maintain these resources for the benefit of all the people, including generations yet to come, would serve to empower and protect all Mainers, now and into the future.

We urge you to vote in favor of environmental justice for all Mainers by advancing LD489 favorably out of Committee.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melissa".

Northeast Regional Manager

Surfrider Foundation

Resident of Cushing, Maine

Pronouns: she/her/hers