

I am writing to testify in support of LD 489 - RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine To Establish a Right to a Healthy Environment. It seems obvious that clean air, water, and a healthy environment should be the right of all peoples (and animals) on this planet. After all, without these things, the planet will slowly die and so will we. But as I am not a scientist or medical professional, I leave that kind of testimony to other folks with the proper credentials.

What I can speak to is the spiritual and mental health benefits of a healthy and vibrant ecosystem. Over this last year of Covid 19 isolation, many, including myself, flocked to the forests and beaches to commune with nature when we could not commune safely with each other. I live in the mid-coast of Maine, Camden to be specific, and there weren't many days I drove by one of the many state parks where the parking lots weren't filled to near capacity if not overflow. Even on cold days. Lincolnville Beach, tiny, sweet, was packed like a Florida Beach at Spring Break every single day of summer. And these were mostly locals since, of course, for much of this last year, travel and tourism has been discouraged. In a regular year, Maine attracts people from all over the world who crave the beauty and spiritual refreshment of walking in old growth forest, marveling at the full moon rising over Penobscot Bay, the clear skies which allow stargazers to witness meteor showers. I personally knew folks who traveled to Camden Hills State Park to watch Comet Neowise from parts south where light pollution obscured viewing.

Can you imagine what it would be like in a future pandemic if our environment was compromised and we were unable to safely recreate outdoors? If our forests were decimated, our beaches polluted. Where would we find solace? Where would we meet safely, at a distance to daydream about the future? To sit in the warmth of the sun, to swim in the salt water, to hear the breeze in the trees, these things offer us connection to something greater than ourselves even when churches cannot safely open. I cannot imagine the despair for our children or grand-children if these sanctuaries were not available down the road.

So, I humbly ask you to move forward with this resolution.

Sincerely,

Rev. Morgan Rowe