

2/28/21

To: Environment and Natural Resources Committee

From: Anna Siegel

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 489, the Pine Tree Amendment

I am writing as a Portland student and climate activist to urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 489 to amend the Maine Constitution.

Two years ago, I summited Mount Katahdin with my dad. We were determined to do the whole mountain in a single day. We woke up incredibly early on an August morning and threw ourselves onto the Abol Trail, navigating massive boulders before the coffee and hot chocolate had kicked in. I buried my head deep within my jacket’s hood as 25 miles per hour gusts of wind pricked my eyes as we traversed the final plateau. I didn’t raise my head until we had truly reached the top, the scraggly wooden sign etched with “Mt. Katahdin: 5,269 feet.” Looking out from the highest point of Maine, I gasped. My state, seeming as big as the world, was spread out below me in a collage of fields, roads, woods, and rivers. It was unimaginably beautiful, but from such a great height, seemed fragile as well. Like with a sweep of my hand from the top of a mountain, it could all disappear. I forgot this tandem feeling of appreciation and delicacy for the Maine landscape until I understood that it needs to be fought for. The mountain, the sky, the world I saw below me, the creatures and all the people who live upon it, must be protected and even *saved*.

When gazing upon a map of Maine, one can see that there is a large blank space with no major roads or towns, cradled between the highways running along the coastline. This blank space is mostly ten million acres of commercial forest managed by timber companies. The blank space is also the largest contiguous tract of undeveloped forest east of the Mississippi River. This forest is priceless habitat for countless boreal species along with Neotropical migrants such as the bright and colorful warblers. Without proper protection, this remote habitat could easily be forgotten by everyone except for the birds and the birders, who would return from their migrations only to see their haven desecrated by pipelines, corridors, mismanagement, and exploitation of resources.

Amending the Maine Constitution writes environmental protections into the highest state law and solidifies what would otherwise be empty words of “sustainability” and “action.” The amendment brings a lens of equity along with accountability. Clean water, air, and a livable future for all transcend every arbitrary category that people may fit into. And on the summit of Mount Katahdin, there are no categories, only a deep respect for the natural world. A natural world that can only continue to survive and hopefully, eventually, thrive if resolutions such as LD 489 are passed.

Respectfully submitted,  
Anna Siegel

Anna Siegel  
Yarmouth

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