

Charles Spanger
Scarborough

Greetings to the committee cochairs, my own Senator, Stacy Brenner, and Representative _____ ; and to all members of this committee.

My name is Charles Spanger. I live in Scarborough. I am a member of the Scarborough Conservation Commission, 350 Maine, and Portland based Elders for Future Generations. I will enthusiastically testify in favor of LD489, the Maine Pine Tree Amendment. I will not cite the amply proven necessity for bold environmental action at this time or the many technical and legal arguments for this bill that you will have heard. I will go to the jist of the matter as I understand it.

Clearly we are now beset with enormous societal, environmental and political challenges. As a climate activist for 35 years I have over time become skeptical of our society's willingness and ability to confront the climate crisis - even as it has accelerated and become more immediate. Until very recently there has not been much meaningful government response. So when I learned about this common sense constitutional amendment and those in other states I thought, "Now here is a powerful tool that can accomplish extraordinary things."

By constitutionally codifying overlooked but essential human rights that our founders could not foresee we will be able to lean into the work of safeguarding quality lives for our offspring. I am rather old now, and prior to covid I attended numerous climate events with my children and grandchildren, three generations of hopeful activists. My oldest daughter is a climate analyst at the Union of Concerned Scientists. She was astonished and most impressed when I told her about this common sense initiative before the Maine legislature.

As you know this amendment will constitutionally codify for every Maine citizen, no matter her origin or station, the rights to pure water, clean air, and healthy, habitable ecosystems - for generations to come. It brings to mind the old Iriquois Federation's commandment to (and I paraphrase): "Do nothing that will harm anyone or anything seven generations into the future." I always thought this was extraordinarily brilliant, but until now I could not imagine our culture adopting such a visionary practice. This Pine Tree Amendment imagines that very thing and can codify it into our state's most powerful legal document - just in time for our youth I might add.

Similarly the MPTA reminds me of the highly respected health care edict to "First do no harm." The amendment will require the state legislature, agencies, regulators, and courts to always protect these basic rights in the course of their work, especially before taking action. For example it will preempt the release of poisons that cause us cancers and the like. Because it will prevent missteps it will also set us on a course to having the sustainable economy that future generations will need. Ideally only those measures that are benign or good for us will be undertaken. Imagine if everyone had a job they could be proud of without reservation.

Troubled times require bold action. Please pass LD489 in your committee and guide it through the legislature with 2/3 majorities. We the citizens will see it through from there, as we must.

Thank you