



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION  
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002  
(207) 287-1400  
TTY: Maine Relay 711

## **Rachel Talbot Ross**

Assistant House Majority Leader  
Office: (207) 287-1430  
[Rachel.TalbotRoss@legislature.maine.gov](mailto:Rachel.TalbotRoss@legislature.maine.gov)

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*Testimony of Assistant House Majority Leader Rachel Talbot Ross as cosponsor of*  
**LD 489, RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the  
Constitution of Maine To Establish a Right to a Healthy  
Environment**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Environmental and Natural Resources*

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker and esteemed members of the Environmental and Natural Resources Committee, I am Rachel Talbot Ross. I represent House District 40 and serve as assistant House majority leader. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of **LD 489, RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine To Establish a Right to a Healthy Environment**, and I want to commend Senator Chloe Maxmin for leading the way in this important effort.

LD 489 presents an extraordinary opportunity for all Mainers. We have the opportunity to enshrine the right to a healthy environment--to clean air, clean water and a healthy ecosystem--in our state constitution.

As you know, both our state and our nation recognize the inalienable rights of the people in our constitutions. Maine's constitution recognizes these "natural rights" – that the government derives its authority from the people, that every individual has the right to worship as they choose, that every person is free to speak their mind, and that we all have the right to due process and equal treatment by the law, among other sacred rights.

The right to a healthy environment should be recognized in the same manner. It belongs alongside the above rights that we recognize as inherent to all people.

All life is predicated on a healthy environment, and everyone deserves to live with the benefits of our natural resources and without the harmful impact of pollution and environmental degradation. The Pine Tree Amendment affirmatively states that all Mainers, regardless of background or zip code, have the right to a healthy environment and that the state is a steward of these resources.

The bill's nickname itself, The Pine Tree Amendment, highlights how deeply rooted these values are in our culture as Mainers. We value our environment, the natural resources and beauty that make our state so special. The Pine Tree Amendment will protect this central cultural value for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

District 40: Portland neighborhoods of Parkside, Bayside, East Bayside, Oakdale and the University of Southern Maine campus