

Ian Doherty
Falmouth
LD 928

3/31/23

To: Senator Stacy Brenner, Representative Lori Gramlich, and Honorable members of the committee

From: Ian Doherty

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 928, a Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish a Right to a Healthy Environment

My name is Ian Doherty and I am a student at Falmouth High School. I am writing as a concerned citizen in support of the Pine Tree Amendment. The Pine Tree Amendment is crucial because it ensures that all Mainers have the right to a clean and healthy environment and that legislatures, governors, permits, laws and more will be made with the respect to honoring our rights to a clean environment. Most importantly, the Constitution is permanent, meaning the Amendment would serve as a clear anchor for environmental rights in Maine.

As I'm sure you are all aware, as climate change and global warming continue to increase, taking action against such issues is becoming more and more paramount. However, there is nothing in our state Constitution that guarantees the right to a safe environment, which let's face it, is critical for our state to thrive, not to mention the world. The Pine Tree Amendment would change this, allowing the voices of many people to be heard, and helping to cement the right to a clean environment as a pillar of our state constitution, and a right of the people which cannot be taken away. Secondly, unlike much of our political and governmental atmosphere, the Pine Tree Amendment would remain unchanged. With this amendment written in the pages of the Maine State Constitution, the right to a clean environment would be steadfast, and something that the people of Maine can rely on to make their voices and stories heard. Furthermore, the impacts of this amendment would be felt in all legislatures, governors, permit policies, and more in Maine. In short, this amendment would help prevent organizations, companies, and legislation from being passed that would inhibit or be detrimental to the right to a healthy environment. Even as our political climate changes and shifts through the years, the balance of power following in its wake, the right to a healthy environment would remain as part of our Constitution always.

Now let me ask you, "What comes to mind when you think of Maine?" You surely think about the placid yet chilling water of our lakes and rivers, or our picturesque shoreline with lighthouses dotted around the sheer granite cliffs. Or maybe you think of our lobsterman, working tirelessly for hours on end to bring such a delicacy to our tables, keeping one of Maine's most long-lasting industries alive.

Throughout my life, I have always been passionate and involved in the environment around me. As an avid birder, sailor, rock climber, and lover of the outdoors, climate change and the health of the environment is especially important to me. For instance, nearly every fall I travel to the tiny island of Monhegan in the Gulf of Maine to experience the full spectrum of bird migration in our wonderful state. However, on each trip the same sentiment is repeated, "It's just not like the good old days." Of course, climate change is the reason. Every year, as warmer temperatures persist, the migration of our feathered friends changes, every consecutive year they arrive later and later. This doesn't just disappoint fellow birders, but it creates huge problems for the birds themselves as their navigation is thrown off by storms and they become exhausted. Therefore, Maine needs the Pine Tree Amendment. It would be a bold step to ensuring that the environment and birds of our great state continue to prosper. Furthermore, as citizens of the great state of Maine, we have always been viewed as stewards of the land. Our icy-cold rivers and streams, craggy mountains, and exquisite coastlines are the soul of our state. C'mon people, they don't call it "Vacationland" for nothing. But this beauty and splendor of our Maine lands are changing fast, and not for the better. If we don't take action to save our state's environment, it will have

far-reaching consequences, and it will only be yet another thorn in our fight for our values. Without a clean environment, the fight to treat and protect all of our communities equally, equal justice for all, and much more, will be even more of an uphill battle. This will continue to further segregate Maine people and will make not only our goals for the future but will make future generations of Maine people have to live in a state without its glory. And let's not forget, we will not be the first to pass such an amendment. New York and Pennsylvania have already stepped up to the plate, passing similar environmental amendments. And these have worked wonders, helping to create standards for environmental modification projects, helping promote clean drinking water for all, and much more. Most importantly, these amendments have brought the consideration of environmental impacts to the fore, putting clear standards and checks on the green-lighting of potentially environmentally harmful projects and operations. We could do the same. We could be the ones to pass a similar amendment, one that will serve as the foundation for a long-term clean environment, as well as future legislation, and action in our great state. By taking this step, the precedent for a clean environment would be set, one that can't be overridden by politics and legislation.

Sadly, I know this amendment will certainly not solve all of our environmental issues. We have a long way to go to secure a clean, healthy environment, and allow ourselves a sigh of relief. However, the Pine Tree Amendment is a bold step to continuing the conversation of our environment further, to institute real action and real change. It may be one small parchment of paper, but for everyone that calls Maine home, it just might be the golden ticket for keeping our environment safe for generations to come.

Respectfully submitted,
Ian Doherty