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Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, members of the ENR Committee,

My name is Luke Sekera - Flanders. I am an undergraduate student at the University of Maine and an organizer with Community Water Justice. Though I could not make it to speak with you today, I am grateful for the opportunity to offer my support for the Pine Tree Amendment.

I come from the town of Fryeburg, Maine. We have been the site of one of Poland Spring's major bulk water extraction operations since they secured a 45 year contract with the town's private water supplier. The public's voice and our right to clean, drinkable water were not taken into consideration during that process. Nor were the long term environmental implications of drawing millions upon of gallons from an aquifer with little oversight and the looming impacts of climate change on our water cycle.

I was among the Fryeburg residents involved with the challenge to the 45 year contract in court. While I was not a plaintiff, of voting age, or familiar with the scientific and legal language that surrounded me, I began to see for myself that not only was this contract wrong, but that the system we were supposed to rely on for help was not meeting our pleas for transparency and accountability. We also recently found out that our town's drinking water contains severe levels of PFAS chemicals, and likely has for decades.

This is a common reality for communities facing environmental exploitation by industry. Especially for marginalized communities, the interests of capital are consistently overrepresented while the people who are devastated are often excluded or dismissed from the process of determination for these profiteering endeavors.

Everybody needs clean air and water. The importance of maintaining a balanced relationship with the natural world which we are a part of is far more important than short-sighted goals of immediate financial gain which only benefits an extremely limited number of people. With the uncertainty brought about by changes in our climate, I urge that as policy makers, you all take into deep consideration not only our well being and survival, but those of the countless generations that will follow us, who will one day rely on the same resources we are responsible for today.

The Pine Tree Amendment is one critical step we can take in the legal process to empower communities such as mine to better defend the environment and future generations. This amendment is an affirmation of basic, irrefutable truths which must inform environmental, economic and social policies moving forward if it is our goal to protect the water for future generations.

Thank you for reading this testimony.

Respectfully,

Luke Sekera - Flanders