



Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
c/o Legislative Information Office
Cross Building, Room 216
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD489

Dear Senator Brenner , Representative Tucker and other members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

My name is Jerry Marx. I am a resident of Portland and Executive Director of the Maine Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. There are over 5,000 licensed social workers providing health services to residents throughout the state.

NASW Maine urges your support of LD489. This resolution proposes to amend the Constitution of Maine to grant the people of the State a right to a clean and healthy environment and to the preservation of the natural, cultural, recreational, scenic and healthful qualities of the environment.

American citizens, including those from Maine, are concerned about environmental pollution and the threat it represents to natural resources and public health. The fact that low income and racial minority groups are disproportionately victimized by environmental pollution makes the problem a matter of social, economic, and environmental justice.

In a recent national survey (Marx, 2020), almost three out of four respondents (71%) were "very concerned" or "somewhat concerned" with outdoor water pollution in lakes, rivers, or oceans. In fact, outdoor water pollution was the leading concern in the survey. Close to two-thirds (61%) of respondents – including 91% of African Americans - were very or somewhat concerned with air pollutants in their community. Over half (56%) of survey respondents were very or somewhat concerned with drinking water pollution in their community. African Americans (80%) are more likely than survey participants overall (56%) to be very or somewhat concerned with drinking water pollution in their community.

Environmental pollution is a particular threat to the state of Maine, as you know, because Maine's economy is heavily dependent on its natural resources. Yet, toxic dumping into Maine's many rivers, to take one example, continues to negatively impact many groups. Witness the recent efforts of the E.P.A. and Maine tribes to protect "sustenance fishing areas." These areas include the main stem of the Penobscot River, where the Penobscot Nation fishes, as well as parts of the Aroostook, St. Croix, and St. John rivers.



Environmental pollution threatens not only fishing in Maine, but also public drinking water supplies, restaurant and hotel owners who depend on tourism, and the real estate industry. All Mainers should have a right to a clean and healthy environment. For this reason, NASW Maine urges you to support LD489.

Respectfully submitted,

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References:

Marx, J.D. (2020). *Environmental Justice & Healthy Communities: Stories of Citizens Taking Action*. Retrieved at: https://www.amazon.com/Environmental-Justice-Healthy-Communities-Citizens/dp/B08S2VRHZ1/ref=sr_1_1?crid=MBUQIL75IRDT&dchild=1&keywords=environmental+justice+%26+healthy+communities&qid=1614877796&s=books&sprefix=Healthy+Communities+%2Caps%2C167&sr=1-1

Publication based in part on “Healthy Community Survey” done by Marx in collaboration with the University of New Hampshire Survey Center.