

Maine Climate Action **NOW!**

To: Maine Legislature Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry

From: Ezra Sassaman, Advocacy Coordinator, Maine Climate Action Now

Date: February 11, 2025

Re: LD 14: An Act to Provide Indigenous Peoples Free Access to State Parks

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, my name is Ezra Sassaman. I live in Bar Harbor and represent Maine Climate Action Now (MCAN), a coalition of fifteen nonprofit organizations from across Maine united by a desire to progress our state forward.

MCAN stands in solidarity with the Penobscot Nation, the Passamaquoddy Tribe, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians and the Mi'kmaq Nation and recognizes there is no climate or environmental justice without the inclusion of the tribes. The Wabanaki Nations have a history of stewardship of natural resources and the land, and must have the unfettered right to access the lands, waters, and resources they hold as sacred and traditionally significant.

In the recent past, national parks and monuments, among them Acadia¹ and Katahdin Woods and Waters², have begun taking important steps towards Tribal co-stewardship and including accurate portrayals of Native American culture and history at these sites.³

The precedent for this bill has also been directly set. In 2022, Minnesota passed its own version of LD 14, granting free access to state parks for any member of the 11 federally recognized tribal nations in the state.⁴

LD 14 represents an extension of these commendable efforts and for the above reasons, our coalition encourages an “ought-to-pass” recommendation on this bill. Thank you.

¹ National Park Service. [“National Park Service issues new policy guidance to strengthen Tribal co-stewardship of national park lands and waters”](#). *Office of Communications*. September 13, 2022. Accessed February 11, 2025.

² Kaitlyn Budion. [“Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument unveils Tekakapimək Contact Station”](#). *Maine Public*. August 16, 2024, Accessed February 11, 2025.

³ Wil Phinney. [“The Indigenous Voice at the Helm of the National Park Service”](#). *Underscore.news*. January 6, 2022. Accessed February 25, 2025.

⁴ Walker Orenstein, [“Starting in 2022, tribal members will get free permits to Minnesota state parks.”](#) *MinnPost*. September 23, 2021. Accessed February 25, 2025.