

ADVANCE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE & EQUITY IN STATE ACTIONS

LD 2018 will define, prioritize, and support meaningful community engagement, equitable decision-making, and just environmental policies.

Climate change and environmental hazards are inextricably linked to equity.

- In Maine and across the world, climate change and environmental concerns pose the greatest threats to communities that are already marginalized, overburdened, or underserved. For example, people who live in substandard housing, who are experiencing homelessness, or who lack access to reliable transportation are more vulnerable to the impacts of extreme weather caused by climate change.
- Disadvantaged communities may also have limited opportunities and access to climate strategies that help Maine people, such as by reducing energy costs from installing a heat pump and home weatherization.
- Equitable environmental action requires the thoughtful distribution of benefits and mitigation of burdens, so that the policy intended to help does not instead cause further marginalization and harm.

Environmental policies should be developed, implemented, and enforced in close partnership with the communities impacted "first and worst" by environmental and climate threats.

- Equitable implementation of the strategies contained in *Maine Won't Wait*, the state's four-year plan for climate action, requires clear definitions and substantial work related to equity and justice.
- To understand the needs of Maine's impacted and frontline communities, those communities must be identified and involved in creating the policies that will affect their well-being.
- The Maine Climate Council's Equity Subcommittee defines **disadvantaged communities** as those who have experienced historical and ongoing systemic discrimination, restricted power, and underrepresentation in state policymaking.
- The Subcommittee uses definitions of **environmental justice**, **fair treatment**, and **frontline communities** developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- LD 2018 would adopt these definitions and define Maine's environmental justice and frontline populations, consistent with emerging federal policy but applicable to Maine's unique situations and communities.



State processes should be inclusive and accessible to Maine's most impacted communities, who have been historically underrepresented in policymaking.

- State agencies and policymakers address environmental threats through public hearings, rulemaking, licensing, permitting, renewable energy procurements, utility rate-making, and more.
- LD 2018 would require Maine's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to create a Community Engagement Team to meet people where they are, support increased outreach and education efforts, and develop an Environmental Justice Action Plan that includes rules to incorporate community input.
- It would implement immediate changes to make proceedings of the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) more accessible to Maine people and requires the PUC to develop an Environmental Justice Action Plan.

Support LD 2018. Adopt definitions of equity and environmental justice and support meaningful community engagement at DEP and PUC.

For more information, please contact
Jeff Marks, Acadia Center, at (207) 956-1970 or jmarks@acadiacenter.org.

Environmental Priorities Coalition

Maine's **Environmental Priorities Coalition** is a partnership of 37 environmental, conservation, and public health organizations representing over 120,000 members who want to protect the good health, good jobs, and quality of life that our environment provides.

We are counting on Maine policymakers to take the important steps needed to protect Maine's extraordinary environment so all Maine people and Maine communities can thrive.

