

Senator Carson, Representative Tucker and Members of the Environment & Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Melanie Lanctot. I live in Readfield, and I am a member of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network and the Co-Leader of our Climate Issue Group. I'm testifying in favor of LD 797. As a Unitarian Universalist I could approach the issue of climate change from the perspective of social justice: Do we in the developed world have the right to cause, through floods, droughts and sea level rise, the destruction of the homes and livelihood of people who have not benefitted from our use of fossil fuels. Or, I could focus on the social disruption that will occur, if we continue on the destructive path we are on, from the flight of climate refugees, a challenge that will make the Syrian diaspora pale in comparison. Or, I could express concern for the loss to the state's economy as cold-water species such as the lobster continue migrating north in response to the warming of the Gulf of Maine, one of the two places on Earth, where the oceans are heating up the fastest. But I also want to describe for you my own personal joys from experiencing the natural world and my concerns about the loss of biodiversity.

During the year that I was in the Maine Master Naturalist program, I was taught to slow down, look closely and appreciate the awe-inspiring beauty and variety of life all around me. Every time I went outside there was something fascinating to behold, whether it was the exquisite eye-spot on a luna moth's wing, or a white, lacy larva, or, looking like an alien life-form, a lichen whose algal and a fungal ancestors decided to join forces a billion and a half years ago, teaching us the staying power of cooperation! And then there was the short-tailed weasel, Hermine the Ermine, that I discovered in my bathroom one cold February morning. He was beautiful, intelligent and as curious about me as I was about him. That year I took many pictures to share with people in hopes of sparking in them a fascination with the natural world and a desire to protect its creatures. Some of my favorites are on the second page of this testimony.

But I also want to share with you a picture in "The Photo Ark" that touches me to the core (third page in this testimony). The photographer, Joel Sartore, travelled around the world documenting 6,000 marvelous species, approximately half those now under human care in zoos, preserves and private collections. But this is not about the loss of a few charismatic animals. What is at stake is summed up in these lines from the book's foreword: "...our planet is losing life-forms faster than at any time since the disappearance of the dinosaurs." "Unless we preserve the rest of life, as a sacred duty, we will be endangering ourselves by destroying the home in which we evolved, and on which we completely depend."

In order to advance the transition from a carbon-based to a sustainable energy economy and slow the loss of biodiversity, I ask you to support LD 797 and help Maine get back on track doing our share to mitigate the effects of climate change, including the loss of species that threatens our own species' survival.