

The Youth and Our Future

We represent four voices from Franklin County testifying to specific ways that the fabric of our society would be destroyed by the proposed pipeline. It's inevitable upheaval and destruction would affect every member of our community gravely. We beg you to take the comments below seriously because we deserve to be heard.

We want to speak personally about Woolman Hill in Deerfield – a location where the powerlines are yards away and are slated to be used for the pipeline. This decades-old conference center would no longer be able to function. Renters include local colleges, social service agencies, and ourselves. We are counselors at a summer program there called Journey Camp that runs each summer. Woolman Hill has become a safe haven for many people in our community, especially children, and a pipeline would be extremely invasive. We want to testify on behalf of all the children who would be personally affected by this construction. How do you expect us to tell the children we work with that the place of learning, nature, and safety--the only place where some of them feel safe, a place where they find support and comfort--the place they return to summer after summer, will be desiccated by the pipeline? The world needs more educational places and programs for children, and this pipeline would put some of them in jeopardy. One of us also works at a program that rents the space at Woolman Hill, Wolfree Programs. Wolfree is a nature based education program that through nature connection works to cultivate children's strengths, confidence and passions as leaders and stewards of their communities. Both Journey Camp and Wolfree programs, in addition to other valuable and innovative educational programs would be destroyed by the proposed pipeline, and this is a very grave concern for us.

The people of Franklin County have been working for decades to preserve the land here. There is a lot of conserved territory and protected marshland that should not be disturbed. It is vital that we continue to guard this land because it is an important tourist attraction that fuels the economy, and our county is one of the few places left on earth with clean drinking water and fertile farmland. Agriculture is central to our community, and a pipeline would be devastating to the farmers here. Please don't destroy the farms that have taken decades to build.

We grew up believing in democracy and are outraged that a wealthy company owner could trump the needs of citizens. So many towns have voted against the pipeline, and yet somehow it is acceptable to you that their votes don't matter. What is the purpose of democracy if the people's voices aren't heard?

There is a strong collective voice speaking out against this pipeline. We are just four of the many people who care deeply about this land and this community. Each of us has a personal connection to this area. We speak on behalf of the children of our programs, of the land we call home, of the farms that sustain us, of the cleaning drinking water that is vital to us, of land that has been protected and unharmed for hundreds of years, and of all the people whose lives will be devastated by this pipeline.

Massachusetts as a state would be thrown into inconsolable grief, unnecessary loss and travail. Every landowner whose land is used or whose land is near by would have their life upended. The decision to install a pipeline would damage our program and organization, our homes, our land, our economy, our community, our stability, and our safety. Do not ignore us any longer.

From Grace Engelman, Puja Kranz-Howe, Aiyana Masla, and Sarah Pirtle

