

From Rep. Berry 7/30/20

Proposed Committee Amendment to LD 2127, An Act To Support Farmland Preservation by Allowing the Siting of Solar Energy Installations on Land Enrolled in the Farm and Open Space Tax Law Program.

NEW TITLE: Resolve, To Identify Opportunities to Support Both Farmland Conservation and Local Energy Production By Amending Current Use Tax Laws or Other State and Local Policies

Sec. 1 Study of Opportunities to Support Both Farmland Conservation and Local Energy Production By Amending Current Use Tax Laws or Other State and Local Policies. Resolved: That the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry shall establish a working group to study the challenges and opportunities facing farmers and farmland owners considering the installation of solar or other local energy generation. The working group shall consider the impact of property taxes, solar energy siting and design decisions, and other factors on the use and long-term conservation of agricultural land that is enrolled in the Farm and Open Space Law under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 36, chapter 2, subchapter 10 and where solar energy installations are located. The working group must include representatives designated by the State Tax Assessor and by statewide organizations representing municipal governments, solar energy developers, farmers and farmland conservation advocates. The working group shall consider and recommend policies to encourage solar energy installations to be sited on farmland and incorporated into farming activities in ways that will help keep land in farming and protect prime farmland. At a minimum, the policies that are considered should include, but are not limited to tax policy, farm and municipal viability, dual use methods of production and soil health as means to achieve this objective. The department shall submit a report on the findings and recommendations of the working group to the Joint Standing Committees on Taxation and on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry by April 15, 2021. Either committee may submit a bill related to the report to the First Regular Session of the 130th Legislature.

Summary

This amendment changes the bill to a resolve directing the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to form a working group to study the impact of property taxes and other factors on the use of agricultural land that is enrolled in the Farm and Open Space Law and where solar energy installations are located and to support and encourage such use..