



## Maine Municipal Association

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### Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Support of LD 1711

*An Act To Promote Solar Energy Projects and Distributed Generation Resources*

May 16, 2019

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Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee, my name is Garrett Corbin and I submitting this testimony in support of LD 1711 on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association at the direction of the Association's statewide Legislative Policy Committee.

A growing number of municipal officials are convinced that public policy ought to support the broader introduction of solar power into the mix of generation resources given the potential for reduced carbon footprint and savings to taxpayers in the form of reduced electricity bills for public facilities.

The Association is aware of over 70 municipal or municipally-affiliated photovoltaic electric generation operations statewide. From an installation on a school rooftop, to a large array on a capped landfill, the net energy billing arrangement allows these projects to lower the amount of electricity required to be purchased from transmission and distribution utilities, saving taxpayer resources over time.

Municipal officials see the existing limit on the number of accounts or meters eligible as one of the key impediments to further expanding electricity generation capacities. The Association's Policy Committee supports expanding the cap to at least 200 customers or meters in order to encourage the continued development of innovative alternatives to the relatively costly electricity purchased from Maine's grid.

According to MDEP data, there are approximately 1,800 acres of capped municipal landfills in Maine. Developing that acreage for solar allows these capped landfills to generate electricity equivalent to millions of dollars' worth of electricity costs paid by municipalities for street lights, traffic lights, water treatment, and other municipal functions. Expanding the allowance for larger community solar projects will remove a key barrier to developing cost effective solar options to offset current electric consumption costs. Because of the restrictions

under the current system, the practical option to convert undevelopable municipal property into useful electricity generation is far too limited.

Encouraging the redevelopment of closed landfills and brownfields in a way that allows them to become power generators is sensible public policy. The reforms contained in LD 1711 are intended to ease and expand the ability for small- and medium-size businesses, schools, municipalities, specialty manufacturing facilities, and others to install solar arrays to offset some or most of the electricity these users consume. Municipalities are constantly seeking options that help reduce the burden on local property taxpayers. This legislation presents such an option.