

**Testimony before the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology
in opposition to LD 376: An Act to Repeal the Law Regarding the
Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program**

February 14, 2023

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, my name is Phelps Turner, and I am a senior attorney with Conservation Law Foundation (CLF). I appreciate this opportunity to testify in opposition to LD 376, An Act to Repeal the Law Regarding the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program.

CLF, founded in 1966, is a public interest advocacy group that works to solve the environmental challenges threatening the people, natural resources and communities in Maine and across New England. In Maine for almost four decades, CLF is a member-supported organization that works to ensure that laws and policies are developed, implemented and enforced that protect and restore our natural resources; are good for Maine's economy and environment; and equitably address the climate crisis.

CLF opposes LD 376 because it would eliminate a legislatively created program that will expand economic opportunities in Maine and help satisfy the state's clean energy and climate obligations. The Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program was established pursuant to an Act to Require Prompt and Effective Use of the Renewable Energy Resources of Northern Maine, P.L. 2021, Ch. 380. The law requires clean energy generation and transmission procurements that will grow Maine's economy and help Maine cost-effectively achieve its statutorily mandated greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets and renewable portfolio standard.

Renewable energy development in Maine presents economic development opportunities throughout the associated supply chains¹ and can have a "significant positive impact on the economy."² Furthermore, in-state generation resources like those contemplated in the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program can provide more stable energy costs, and the economic benefits and payments for purchase of these sources of energy can stay within the state, rather than going to out-of-state fossil fuel providers.³

¹ Maine Governor's Energy Office, "Renewable Energy Goals Market Assessment," prepared by Energy and Environmental Economics and Applied Economics Clinic, March 2021, <https://www.maine.gov/energy/studies-reports-working-groups/current-studies-working-groups/renewable-energy-market-assessment>, at 11.

² "Resolve To Study Transmission Solutions To Enable Renewable Energy Investment in the State, Stakeholder Study, Final Report," January 3, 2020, https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov/energy/files/inline-files/LD1401_Transmission_Renewable_Energy%20Study_Stakeholder%20Report.pdf, at 3.

³ Maine Governor's Energy Office, "Renewable Energy Goals Market Assessment," at 11.

In addition to creating economic opportunities, the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program will help Maine meet its climate and clean energy goals. Renewable energy resources will be needed as early as 2026 to meet the state’s increasing renewable portfolio standard (RPS), and action to develop these resources is needed well before 2026.⁴

Transmission is key to unlocking renewable energy resources in northern Maine and doing so affordably: “[M]any lower-cost pathways to meet Maine’s RPS requirements in the next decade are achievable through the development of high-quality wind resources in western and northern Maine, which in turn require new transmission investment.”⁵ Likewise, a recent report of the Maine Utility/Regulatory Reform and Decarbonization Initiative (MURRDI) recognized the importance of transmission development in northern Maine to helping the state achieve its climate and renewable energy goals.⁶

The Legislature has explicitly directed the state to procure renewable energy generation and transmission infrastructure in northern Maine. These mandated actions will create economic opportunities and help Maine meet its renewable energy and climate mandates:

Transitioning to cleaner energy generation and greater energy efficiency offers exciting new economic opportunity. Maine currently spends roughly \$4.4 billion annually on imported fossil fuels. Clean and renewable energy solutions can help keep those energy dollars in Maine, catalyzing a transformative economic impact, while significantly reducing emissions.⁷

By eliminating the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program, LD 376 would harm Maine’s economy and impair Maine’s ability to satisfy its climate obligations.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to LD 376.

⁴ *Id.* at 1.

⁵ *Id.* at 2.

⁶ Maine Utility/Regulatory Reform and Decarbonization Initiative, “Stakeholder recommendations to plan, build, and operate the electric grid that is needed to meet Maine’s climate and energy requirements,” April 2021, <https://www.betterenergy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/MURRDI-Stakeholder-Process-Summary.pdf>, at 26.

⁷ Maine Climate Council, “Maine Won’t Wait: A Four-Year Plan for Climate Action,” December 2020, https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov/future/files/inline-files/MaineWontWait_December2020.pdf at 13.