



State of Maine
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Janet T. Mills
GOVERNOR

William S. Harwood
PUBLIC ADVOCATE

**Testimony 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 distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology,

My name is William Harwood and I am the Public Advocate, here today to testify in opposition to LD 376, “An Act to Repeal the Law Regarding the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program.”

On February 3, 2023, the PUC issued an order in Docket No. 2021-00369, “Request for Proposals for Renewable Energy Generation and Transmission Projects Pursuant to the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program.” In this order, the Commission conditionally approved terms from Longroad Energy and LS Power proposing 60 percent of projects will be funded by ratepayers and that these terms were within the public interest.

The OPA submitted comments in this docket in which we state, “(the) OPA has consistently advocated for the need to aggressively and cost effectively make a clean energy transition to help mitigate the harmful effects on Maine residents due to price swings caused by our overreliance on fossil fuels. We believe one way to accomplish that goal is through competitive bidding in order to bring more grid-scale renewables online.” Turning these bids into long-term contracts will benefit Maine ratepayers for years to come. We have attached the Office’s full comments to this testimony.

The OPA believes the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program will lower rates and will continue to lower rates as more off-takers are added to the transmission line. The OPA cannot support a repeal of this program.



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Thank you for your time, attention, and consideration of this testimony. The Office of the Public Advocate looks forward to working with the Committee on LD 376 and will be available for the work session to assist the Committee in its consideration of this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William S. Harwood".

William S. Harwood
Public Advocate



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January 30, 2023

Harry A. Lanphear
Administrative Director
Maine Public Utilities Commission
State House Station #18
Augusta, ME 04333-0018

RE: Public Utilities Commission
Request for Proposals for Renewable Energy Generation and Transmission Projects
Pursuant to the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program
Docket No. 2021-00369

Dear Mr. Lanphear,

I am writing to follow up recent announcements regarding procurement of renewable energy from Northern Maine.

The Office of Public Advocate is charged with ensuring our statutory policies and regulatory proceedings provide for affordable, high quality utility services. OPA has consistently advocated for the need to aggressively and cost effectively make a clean energy transition to help mitigate the harmful effects on Maine residents due to price swings caused by our overreliance on fossil fuels. We believe one way to accomplish that goal is through competitive bidding in order to bring more grid-scale renewables online. That is why we were encouraged to see the Maine Legislature pass LD 1710, "An Act To Require Prompt and Effective Use of the Renewable Energy Resources of Northern Maine."

Importantly, this law did not mandate that our Maine Public Utilities Commission approve any project or line at any cost - rather, it introduced a competitive bid process that encouraged the most cost-effective generation projects, while also seeking bids for responsibly sited transmission lines using existing rights of way as much as possible.

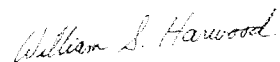
As the PUC noted in its November 1, 2022 Order, the winning generation and

transmission bids best meet the relevant statutory criteria regarding cost and allowing the state to move toward meeting its renewable goals while maximizing economic benefits to the state. But even after the PUC's decision, one additional hurdle remained: the statutory directive to seek additional partners who may wish to purchase some of the output of these facilities. On December 30, 2022, pursuant to its statutory authority, the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources issued its favorable decision that their participation in Maine's procurement would indeed qualify for its beneficial determination. This is no small feat and would be the first time Maine has ever directly partnered with another state in New England for clean energy development.

The Commonwealth's participation is a major milestone for Maine to be able to import the benefits of our clean energy transition, while also exporting some of the associated costs. Notably, Massachusetts' participation in helping to fund these projects expires on February 28, 2023 should the Maine PUC not finalize contracts for Maine's participation in these projects.

Please let me know if there is anything OPA can do to help meet this deadline. We are hopeful the Commission can move toward finalizing these winning bids and turning them into long-term contracts so that Maine ratepayers can benefit from them for years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William S. Harwood".

William S. Harwood
Public Advocate