



# SIERRA CLUB

## MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Members of the Joint Committee on Committee on Energy, Utilities and  
Technology  
From: Jacob Stern  
Date: February 14, 2023  
Re: **Testimony in Opposition to L.D. 340: *An Act Regarding the Purpose and  
Responsibilities of the State Regulatory System for Public Utilities***

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Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and the members of the Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology,

I am testifying today on behalf of Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nation-wide as we work towards combating climate change and promoting a just and sustainable economy. To that end, we strongly urge an "ought not to pass" report on L.D. 340: *An Act Regarding the Purpose and Responsibilities of the State Regulatory System for Public Utilities*.

With all due respect, L.D. 340 is a waste of the committee's time. The legislation, if enacted, would effectively undo a bill from last session: L.D. 1682: *An Act To Require Consideration of Climate Impacts by the Public Utilities Commission and To Incorporate Equity Considerations in Decision Making by State Agencies*. L.D. 1682 received an "ought to pass" report by this committee in June 2021 and went to pass the House and Senate shortly thereafter, receiving bipartisan support in both chambers. Has so much changed in the last couple years that the state should reverse direction on addressing the climate crisis? Of course not.

While Sierra Club does broadly support efforts to educate consumers to make decisions in their best interest and the best interest of our climate, a mandate to educate individuals cannot come at the cost of taking away our government's ability to set rules and standards to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As you know, decades of overproduction of greenhouse gasses have served to insulate our planet, retaining more heat year after year. In fact, just this past January was the warmest on record in Maine.<sup>1</sup> Scientists have warned that average global temperatures could reach 1.5 degrees celsius over pre-industrial levels by as soon as 2040, a temperature benchmark long seen as an indicator of future

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<sup>1</sup> Stockley, Leela. "Maine Just Had Its Warmest-Ever January." Bangor Daily News, 9 Feb. 2023, <https://www.bangordailynews.com/2023/02/09/weather/january-record-temps/>.

environmental disaster.<sup>2</sup> While Maine is, of course, only responsible for a small percentage of global emissions, we have a responsibility to future generations to take every measure to prevent this disaster. An assumption that consumers will be able to make decisions without government intervention to significantly reduce carbon emissions defies historical precedent, which indicates quite the opposite.

Sierra Club recognizes that utilities play a critical role in decarbonizing our economy. In order for us to meet our climate goals we must both rapidly decarbonize the electricity system and expand the supply of electricity to meet increasing demand from beneficial electrification. As the regulatory body for the utilities, the decisions of the Public Utilities Commission will play a key role in determining whether or not we meet our climate goals. It's no coincidence that the states that have been able to make the most progress reducing emissions to date have agencies that are empowered to take leadership.

Therefore we strongly urge an "ought not to pass" report on L.D. 340: *An Act Regarding the Purpose and Responsibilities of the State Regulatory System for Public Utilities*. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Jacob Stern

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Vice Chair, Executive Committee  
Sierra Club Maine Chapter

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<sup>2</sup> "Climate change 2022: Impacts, adaptation and vulnerability." IPCC Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 28 Feb. 2022.