



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. 376: An Act to Repeal the Law Regarding the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program**

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

I am submitting the following testimony 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 urge an "ought not to pass" report on L.D. 376: *An Act to Repeal the Law Regarding the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program*.

L.D. 376 is yet another bill aimed at rewriting history by repealing legislation that was signed into law less than two years ago. If enacted, it would nullify L.D. 1710: *An Act To Require Prompt and Effective Use of the Renewable Energy Resources of Northern Maine*, which received an "ought to pass" report by this committee and passed under the hammer in both the House and Senate in June 2021.

The original legislation (L.D. 1710) required that the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) request proposals for solar, wind, and biomass renewable energy projects. Maine consumes 11.6 TWh of electricity annually.¹ More than 80% of our electricity is currently supplied by renewables.² While this is good, it means there is still approximately 2 TWh of annual fossil fuel generation that needs to be displaced by renewables to meet our climate goals. Moreover, we need to eliminate the billions of barrels of fuel oil, gasoline and gas used annually in Maine. The most effective way to do this is through beneficial electrification, replacing fossil-fueled appliances with electrically-powered alternatives.

¹ "State of Maine Energy Sector Risk Profile." U.S. Department of Energy, <https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2015/05/f22/ME-Energy%20Sector%20Risk%20Profile.pdf>.

² "Maine Energy State Profile and Energy Estimates." U.S. Energy Information Administration, 15 Sept. 2022, <https://www.eia.gov/state/analysis.php?sid=ME>.

The legislation was designed to give Northern Maine an opportunity to contribute to the energy transition and, in doing so, create jobs and grow the local economy. With the potential for thousands of megawatts of wind energy, northern Maine has the potential to account for a significant amount of Maine's requirements for new energy. However, because northern Maine is not connected to ISO-NE, most of that energy cannot currently be used. The situation is similar for solar. Northern Maine has significant solar resources, much greater than in Germany, where solar adoption is much higher. However, the potential for large-scale solar is sharply limited due to the lack of transmission.

Sierra Club submitted testimony in favor of L.D. 1710 last session because we believe that connecting renewable resources in northern Maine to ISO-NE could play a significant role in helping Maine meet its climate goals.

It's also worth noting that even repealing L.D. 1710 at this point would have a limited impact since projects outlined in the original legislation have already received PUC approval. According to PUC Chair Phil Bartlett, "These projects will provide significant benefits to Maine and the region, including jobs during construction, property tax revenue for local communities and environmental benefits from new renewable energy displacing fossil fuels. The influx of renewable energy into the regional grid will also place downward pressure on electricity prices, benefiting consumers in Maine and throughout New England."³

We agree with Chair Bartlett and urge an "ought not to pass" report on L.D. 376: *An Act to Repeal the Law Regarding the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program*. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jacob Stern

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Member, Executive Committee
Sierra Club Maine Chapter

³ Turkel, Tux. "Northern Maine wind power project wins PUC approval." Portland Press Herald, 31 Jan. 2023, <https://www.pressherald.com/2023/01/31/northern-maine-wind-power-project-wins-puc-approval/>.