



Natural Resources Council of Maine

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**Testimony in Opposition to LD 698, An Act to Reduce the Cost of Energy in Maine and Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions Through the Effective use of Bridge Fuels**

**Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology**

**by Jack Shapiro, Climate and Clean Energy Program Director**

**March 8, 2023**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and honorable members Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology: My name is Jack Shapiro. I am the Climate and Clean Energy Director at the Natural Resources Council of Maine. NRCM has been working for more than 60 years to protect, restore, and conserve Maine's environment, and I am here today on behalf of our 25,000 members and supporters to testify in opposition to LD 698, An Act to Reduce the Cost of Energy in Maine and Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions Through the Effective use of Bridge Fuels.

This bill is clearly well-intentioned and aimed at critical issues: reducing costs for Mainers and creating a more secure energy future for our state and our region. We share those goals.

However, our opposition to this bill is based on the fact that pursuing expanding natural gas infrastructure and our commitment to gas as a fuel for heating and power generation will not result in either reduced costs or reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

With regard to emissions: Natural gas creates significant carbon dioxide emissions when burned, but just as important, natural gas is largely composed of methane. Methane is a climate super-pollutant. It traps more than 80 times more heat in our atmosphere than carbon dioxide over the first 20 years after it reaches the atmosphere<sup>1</sup> – the same timescales in which Maine's greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets – set by the Legislature – must be met.

Methane leaks. It leaks from pipelines, from storage facilities, from distribution mains, from service lines, and from appliances within the home. Multiple studies have shown that these leaks are systematically undercounted – including by the EPA methodology currently used in Maine's greenhouse gas accounting.<sup>23</sup> This poses a significant threat to Maine's ability to meet our statutorily required greenhouse gas reduction goals.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.iea.org/reports/methane-tracker-2021/methane-and-climate-change>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.science.org/content/article/major-us-cities-are-leaking-methane-twice-rate-previously-believed>

Building new natural gas infrastructure will not reduce costs in the long-term. It will create new risks of stranded assets and expectations from investors that business as usual must continue to have ratepayers pay for their infrastructure investments even as they become obsolete. If we spend our time and energy expanding natural gas infrastructure and supply instead of investing in clean energy, storage, and a modern grid to support them, it will only make this problem worse and more difficult to solve.

Pushing for new natural gas infrastructure in Maine or New England won't reduce price impacts in the short-term either. The recent spikes in natural gas prices, and as a result electricity prices, were caused by events far outside of Maine and New England. Natural gas is part of a complex, and importantly global, fossil fuel market. We don't produce natural gas in Maine, and fossil fuel producers will always maximize their profits by selling to China, Europe, or wherever they can get the best prices, leaving Maine behind.

Crucially, doubling down on this 20<sup>th</sup> century technology and fuel source is unnecessary. We have the technologies in our hands right now to generate electricity at lower cost than gas.<sup>4</sup> Heat pumps heat homes and businesses at the same or lower costs than gas, and much lower than other fossil heating sources.<sup>5</sup>

As the bill title suggests, reducing the cost of energy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions are goals that we share. However pursuing more fossil fuel dependence is not the path to do it.

We recommend the Committee vote Ought Not To Pass on LD 698. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I'd be happy to answer any questions that you have.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.0c00437>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.eia.gov/outlooks/aeo/pdf/electricity\\_generation.pdf](https://www.eia.gov/outlooks/aeo/pdf/electricity_generation.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.efficiencymaine.com/at-home/heating-cost-comparison/>