



Northeast Hearth, Patio, and Barbecue Association

PO Box 28, Sudbury, MA 01776 • 978-440-0344 • nehpba.org

March 16, 2023

TESTIMONY OF KAREN ARPINO

Executive Director of the Northeast Hearth, Patio and Barbecue Association

BEFORE THE MAINE COMMITTEE ON STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

On behalf of the Northeast Hearth, Patio and Barbecue Association, I am offering written testimony in Support of LD 894 An Act to Preserve Heating and Energy Choice by Prohibiting a Municipality from Prohibiting a Particular Energy System or Energy Distributor

The Northeast Hearth, Patio and Barbecue Association (NEHPBA) is pleased to have the opportunity to offer its comments regarding LD 894.

NEHPBA is a trade association representing more than 50 individual member retail and related companies throughout Maine who are supporting over 350 families. The vast majority of our members are independent “mom and pop” small businesses who are significant community contributors in the markets they serve across the state. These are all independent and family-owned hearth shops chimney sweeps, installers, maintenance companies, and any other entity having a commercial interest in the hearth, patio and/or barbecue industry.

We strongly support LD 894 and urge the committee to vote unanimously *Ought to Pass* on this bill. NEHPBA supports the avenues to a cleaner environment. Our members and their customers also want the right to choose the type of energy source that works best for their homes and businesses. More than three-fifths of Maine's households use fuel oil as their primary energy source for home heating, a larger share than any other state, 1 in 10 Maine households use wood as their primary fuel for space heating, and more than 315,000 homes and businesses use clean propane. This bill protects the right of our citizens to decide which energy is right for them.

Using wood, biomass and propane furthers the fundamental environmental goal to Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle as promoted by EPA and DEP. Almost all of the biomass Maine uses for electricity generation is wood and wood waste-derived fuels. Maine also has four wood pellet manufacturing plants that can produce a total of about 232,000 tons of pellets annually. Wood pellets are burned for electricity generation and heating. Wood and Biomass is a partner with renewable energy as it is the perfect source of renewable fuel. NEHPBA believes wood, biomass and propane can be part of the solution and we want Maine citizens to be able to pick these as their energy source.

We support this bill for the following reasons:

- Responsible legislation considers cost impacts on consumers, especially those in overburdened communities. Additionally, passing this legislation will support small “mom and pop” family-owned businesses and keep housing costs consistent.



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- Since most electric heat pumps (ie. minisplits) struggle to keep homes warm when temperatures plunge, they require that traditional heating systems are able to be used as well to ensure that the house can stay warm.
- Consumers should be able to choose the equipment and fuel they want to use to heat their home. Taking away consumer choice will drive up costs and reduces competition. As demand increases for heat pumps availability will decrease while cost increases.
- Energy security and diversity is critical if the state is going to be prepared in times of crisis, whether that be from power outages, winter storms, or world conflicts. Propane and biomass are the unsung heroes of extreme weather events and without a strong market, citizens in ME will suffer.
- Pipeline infrastructure is 99.9% storm proof. We need to ensure that no ME residents are left in the cold without a heat source or are stuck with energy that is not reliable or affordable.
- Another reason that Maine homes need additional energy sources is due to the age of our housing stock. Heat pumps do not work well in older homes, and it is less expensive to continue with existing heating sources. This bill will preserve our citizens freedom of choice to pick the energy that is right for their situation while protecting the less fortunate among us.
- Heat pumps only last fifteen to twenty years, where a traditional boiler can last thirty years or more. Parts to repair and maintain heat pumps are proprietary, unlike traditional heating and cooling systems that have parts that are interchangeable, making it harder and more costly to address problems with them.

Besides being renewable, one of the biggest benefits of wood heat is that it is warm. The State of Maine has incentivized heat pumps and encouraged citizens to use these systems, but Maine has also been very forward thinking in not also requiring that people remove their existing other energy furnaces and boilers when they install heat pumps. This keeps Mainer's safe when temperatures drop down below freezing when heat pumps are not efficient. Other fuel sources are more efficient, more reliable, and less expensive during the coldest periods of winter. This bill ensures that Mainer's will have the right to make these smart choices and stay safe and warm.

Heat pumps need the most energy from the grid during the times when the grid is most stressed. When the grid is stressed, electricity plants switch from using natural gas to generate electricity to using diesel or heating oil for electricity generation. Most recently, on February 4, 2023, 32% percent of the grid was running on oil and 2% was running on coal (see graphic from ISONE app). This is why we need alternative energy sources to heat our homes during the extreme harsh winter weeks, especially when these alternative energy sources do not put stress on our fragile electric grid.

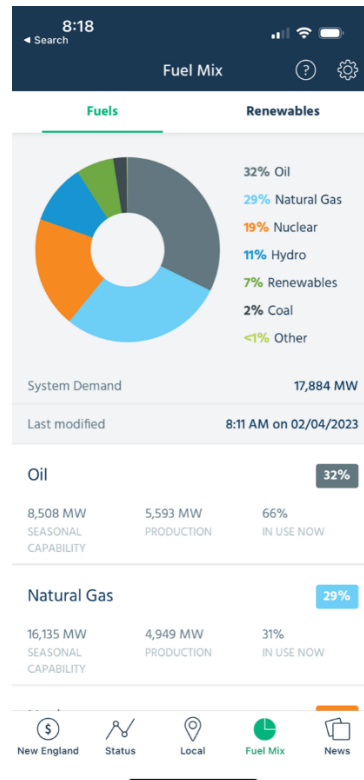


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Thank you for your consideration of our comments and I ask you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 894 the freedom of choice energy bill.

Sincerely,

Karen L. Arpino

Karen L. Arpino
Executive Director
Northeast Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association