



**Testimony in Support of LD 826, “An Act to Prohibit the Disposal of Certain Solar Panels in the State and to Require Bonds to Cover Disposal Costs”**

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and the distinguished members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Nick Murray and I serve as director of policy for Maine Policy Institute. We are a free market think tank, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on LD 826.

A missing piece in the debate over the future of the economy as it relates to clean energy is a fully transparent way to perceive the differences in costs to produce electricity from various sources. This bill is necessary because, too often, the costs of certain energy projects are obfuscated by subsidies from all levels of government.

Lawmakers will often claim the price for solar (or wind) power is much cheaper than it actually costs, because the costs of construction and decommissioning of a project are hidden, yet assume that the inordinately cheap rate for nuclear power is one borne of distortion, even though this cost is *before* subsidies are applied.<sup>1</sup>

Across the pond, British power customers are facing the specter of a grid more heavily reliant on wind and solar energy. Just last year, the grid operator there spent more than \$5.1 billion (£4.2 billion) in emergency payments in the times when the grid did not produce enough power that its customers demanded. Britons rely on renewables like wind and solar to generate electricity at the exact moment they require it. If not, the grid operator must act quickly, shelling out large fees to meet demand.<sup>2</sup>

Since it is costly and physically very difficult to store energy for long periods of time, electricity produced from wind and solar panels when it is not needed will be wasted.

This is just another example of the high cost to ratepayers from relying on sources of energy which are simply not reliable. Mainers should be aware of the full price tag before they are sold another “grid-scale” solar project that will be producing power for only 20-30% of the time. Compare this with base load generation sources like hydroelectric or nuclear plants which run nearly all the time.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.eia.gov/outlooks/aeo/pdf/electricity\\_generation.pdf](https://www.eia.gov/outlooks/aeo/pdf/electricity_generation.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [The Real Price of Wind and Solar](#) | Wall Street Journal | March 12, 2023

In 2020, *Discover* magazine wrote, “As solar panels sit in dumps, the toxic metals they contain can leach out into the environment and possibly pose a public health hazard if they get into the groundwater supply.”<sup>3</sup> Solar panels require very particular rare earth metals and minerals to function properly, which also make them difficult to recycle.

Why don’t policymakers think of these costs when pushing larger, publicly-funded and subsidized solar arrays? It can be a resource-intensive process to simply extract rare metals like nickel and cadmium needed to build solar panels. Shouldn’t market actors see the real price of this technology, since these rare minerals could be used in other cutting-edge technologies which may make more progress against environmental degradation and cleaner energy production?

As the 2020 *Discover* piece explained, while China and the US are the biggest producers of solar panels, “only Europe has taken measures to hold manufacturers responsible for their waste. The European Union requires solar companies to collect and recycle their panels, with the cost of recycling built into the selling price.<sup>4</sup> This way, the panels’ waste and impact on the environment is minimized with only a marginal increase in solar panel price for consumers.”

Please deem LD 826 “Ought To Pass” and provide Maine people the most information possible when determining the proper course of energy policy. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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<sup>3</sup> [Solar Panel Waste: The Dark Side of Clean Energy | Discover Magazine](#)

<sup>4</sup> <https://naturalgasnow.org/solar-panel-waste-solar-energy-not-so-green-after-all/>