



# SIERRA CLUB

## MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Members of the Joint Committee on State and Local Government  
From: Jacob Stern  
Date: March 16, 2023  
Re: **Testimony in Opposition to L.D. 735: *An Act to Require the State to Hold a Public Hearing in a Municipality Before the State Constructs a Solar Project in That Municipality***

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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 strongly oppose and urge a "ought not to pass" report on L.D. 735: *An Act to Require the State to Hold a Public Hearing in a Municipality Before the State Constructs a Solar Project in That Municipality*.

L.D. 735 is a misguided attempt to hamstring development of solar projects with needless bureaucracy. If passed into law, it will cost the state and taxpayers money while delivering no real tangible benefits.

The legislation would require the state hold a public hearing prior to commencing construction on a solar energy project on property owned by the state. However, the bill fails to include any pertinent details to outline a threshold for when a public hearing is required, meaning this legislation could delay simple and insignificant projects. This bill could be interpreted to read that adding solar panels to the roof of a building or over a parking lot requires a public hearing.

Any requirements for the state to hold a public hearing will require state employee time and therefore incur an expense to taxpayers. Furthermore, state-owned solar developments are generally built to provide power to state buildings or infrastructure. Numerous studies have shown that solar power is substantially and reliably cheaper than other energy sources, which is nearly always the reason for constructing them on state-owned property.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Evans, Simon. "Solar is now 'cheapest electricity in history', confirms IEA." CarbonBrief, 13 Oct. 2020, <https://www.carbonbrief.org/solar-is-now-cheapest-electricity-in-history-confirms-iea/>.

Such projects, then, are to the taxpayers' benefit. As a frequent attendee at my town's planning board meeting, I know firsthand that there are numerous opportunities for the public to weigh in on normal state and municipal planning processes. While Sierra Club believes in the importance of public involvement in government processes, this bill fails to give any reason for a specific carveout requirement that solar projects receive additional scrutiny and delay.

Again, we urge an "ought not to pass" report on L.D. 735: *An Act to Require the State to Hold a Public Hearing in a Municipality Before the State Constructs a Solar Project in That Municipality*. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Jacob Stern

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Vice Chair, Executive Committee  
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