



# SIERRA CLUB

## MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Members of the Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology,  
From: Jacob Stern  
Date: March 30, 2023  
Re: **Testimony in Support of L.D. 1101: *An Act to Support Lower Home Energy Costs by Establishing a Home Energy Scoring System***

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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 urge an "ought to pass" report on L.D. 1101: *An Act to Support Lower Home Energy Costs by Establishing a Home Energy Scoring System*.

Just over two years ago, my partner and I purchased our first home in Pownal. We bought our house at the peak of the housing crunch and, although we sought to educate ourselves about the challenges associated with home buying, the process was a difficult one. The house we now live in needed quite a bit of work, which is the only reason we were able to afford it in the first place. Luckily, through the home inspection process we learned what repairs would be needed and how urgently. This information was a powerful negotiation tool and allowed us to deal with some of the most critical issues prior to move-in.

However, there was one topic that was not covered in the inspection: our house's energy costs. Like many Maine homes, ours came with an oil boiler and wood burning stove. Yet, without an energy audit, we had no sense of what either would cost to operate. To make matters worse, it wasn't until we'd lived here for nearly a year that we learned of a massive insulation void in one wall, which resulted in a burst pipe. Getting an expert opinion on our house's energy efficiency (or lack thereof) and likely energy costs prior to closing would have allowed us to deal with this problem sooner and saved us hundreds, if not thousands of dollars.

While this legislation would be hugely impactful for future homebuyers by giving them additional information about what to expect before the closing, it would also create an

incentive for homeowners seeking to sell their homes to invest in energy efficiency upgrades prior to putting their house on the market. A high energy score could be more desirable to buyers – leading to more folks to take advantage of federal and Maine rebates, incentives, and tax credits.

Beyond the immediate benefit to consumers, this bill will also reduce pollution resulting from home heating. The buildings sector accounts for 30 percent of Maine’s total emissions<sup>1</sup> and those emissions have historically been the most difficult to reduce. This legislation will make it easier to reach Maine’s climate goals, boost our clean energy workforce by increasing the demand for energy auditors or installers, and the anonymous collection of carbon and building stock data can be used to inform future building policy. Embracing this legislation is a once in a generation opportunity to decrease carbon emissions and increase durability of Maine’s aging housing stock.

You may hear concerns that this bill would damage Maine’s real estate market, but I can assure you that they are unfounded. Maine’s housing market has cooled slightly since 2021, but only by degrees.<sup>2</sup> Maine remains a top relocation destination for countless millennial-aged professionals and their families.<sup>3</sup> According to the latest Maine Association of REALTORS, for-sale inventory remains historically low.<sup>4</sup> With energy and heating costs rising around the region, empowering consumers to make decisions that benefit both the climate and their pocketbooks is in everyone’s best interest.

Again, we urge an “ought to pass” report on L.D. 1101: *An Act to Support Lower Home Energy Costs by Establishing a Home Energy Scoring System*. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Jacob Stern

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Vice Chair, Executive Committee  
Sierra Club Maine Chapter

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<sup>1</sup> Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). “Eighth Biennial Report on Progress toward Greenhouse Gas Reduction Goals.” January 2020. p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> News Center Maine. “Experts optimistic about Maine housing market for 2023.” January 2023. <https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/money/maine-real-estate-experts-optimistic-about-2023-housing-market-stabilizing-balancing-between-buyers-and-sellers/97-7a671f1f-e4e1-452d-b7b7-689e6ee5ef79>.

<sup>3</sup> Bangor Daily News. “Maine was among the most popular states to move to in 2022.” January 2023. <https://www.bangordailynews.com/2023/01/03/business/maine-inbound-moving-2022-xoasq1i29i/>.

<sup>4</sup> Maine Association of REALTORS. “Home Sales Decline In February Due To Lack of Available Properties For Buyers.” March 2023. <https://www.mainerealtors.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/MaineHousingReport-February23-1.pdf>.