



Natural Resources Council of Maine

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**Testimony in Support of LD 1227, An Act to Balance Renewable Energy Development with
Natural and Working Lands Conservation
To the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
by Jack Shapiro, Climate and Clean Energy Program Director
April 10, 2023**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, Members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee. 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, on behalf of our 25,000 members and supporters. I'm here today to testify in support of LD 1227, An Act to Balance Renewable Energy Development with Natural and Working Lands Conservation.

Maine has ambitious and comprehensive climate and clean energy goals. Achieving these goals will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and our contributions to climate change, which is already affecting our state. Achieving these goals also means opportunity and savings for Maine people as we switch from using expensive fossil fuels to heat our homes and power our vehicles to using cleaner and more efficient electrified appliances and cars and trucks. To enable this transition however, we will need to undertake a significant buildout of renewable energy and other elements of energy infrastructure necessary to support it.

NRCM believes that the construction of a power sector that reduces our dependence on expensive fossil fuels and lessens the risk of dangerous climate impacts to Maine people and communities can be done in a way that considers appropriate siting, keeps costs reasonable, and provides clear climate and community benefits.

This bill moves us towards that goal in two ways:

First, the bill creates a public database of energy projects that will fill a significant data gap, allowing policymakers and advocates to identify and respond to land-use and other trends and learn from our experience as we build the renewable energy we need to meet our statutory clean energy goals.

Second, the bill establishes a dual-use pilot project, an important first step toward understanding how we can maximize the productive use of land in Maine by co-locating energy and agricultural production. While renewable energy technologies like solar are well understood, there is much to

learn about how to make projects that combine agriculture and horticulture with energy generation both economical and productive.

This bill takes concrete steps to gather data and gain experience that will not just support building renewable energy while minimizing impacts to natural and working lands, but support a measure of productive coexistence and benefit.

For that reason we encourage the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1227, and I would be happy to answer any questions that you have.