

**State JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, UTILITIES, AND TECHNOLOGY**

Testimony of Johannah Blackman, Executive Director of A Climate to Thrive

*May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023*

Testimony in Support

**LD 1986: An Act Relating to Net Energy Billing and Distributed Solar and Energy Storage Systems.**

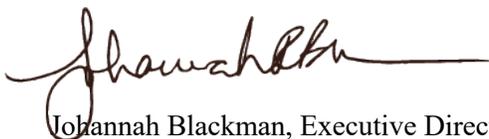
Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and honorable members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee. My name is Johannah Blackman and I am a founding member and the Executive Director for A Climate to Thrive. I am writing in support of **LD 1986 An Act Relating to Net Energy Billing and Distributed Solar and Energy Storage Systems.**

In my work with A Climate to Thrive over the past 7.4 years, I have seen firsthand how local, distributed solar projects benefit communities and community-members of vastly diverse backgrounds. I have witnessed high rural and remote municipalities, small businesses and organizations, school districts, and homeowners of diverse economic backgrounds all benefit from distributed solar projects. I have also seen ambitious climate action plans and goals developed in both local municipalities and the state as a whole. These plans have the potential to bring millions of dollars of federal funding to the State of Maine, focused on an equitable transition off fossil fuels. LD 1986 would support local communities and the State in achieving their climate and renewable energy goals and accessing this incredible opportunity for federal funding.

LD 1986 would protect ratepayers while ensuring that net energy billing projects are fairly compensated for avoided distribution and transmission costs. LD 1986 would resolve current issues with net energy billing and benefit consumers by lowering rates over the long-term. LD 1347, on the other hand, which will be reviewed during the Committee's working session tomorrow, poses a direct threat to community-benefitting solar projects. LD 1347 would remove components of net energy billing that make solar ownership more accessible to low and moderate-income Mainers. In contrast, LD 1986 offers a more favorable, and balanced solution that follows recommendations from the Distributed Generation Stakeholder Group and protects ratepayers, while protecting net energy billing that makes solar ownership viable for all incomes.

In closing, I urge you to pass LD 1986, legislation which supports community and state climate goals while protecting ratepayers. Thank you for your service to the people of Maine.

Sincerely,



Johannah Blackman, Executive Director, A Climate to Thrive