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***Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology***

***RE: LD 589 "An Act to Ensure That the Maine Electric Grid Provides Additional Benefits to Maine Ratepayers" (SP0257)***

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee, my name is Karen Blakelock and I am the Climate and Energy Policy Advisor for The Nature Conservancy in Maine. **I appreciate this opportunity to submit comments in support of LD 589 – An Act to Ensure That the Maine Electric Grid Provides Additional Benefits to Maine Ratepayers.**

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. We use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners. TNC has been leading conservation in Maine for more than 60 years and is the 12th largest landowner in the state, owning and managing roughly 300,000 acres.

As an organization committed to creating a future with healthy lands, waters, and communities, we know that taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors is essential in achieving this. Managing the grid to encourage the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is a necessary step towards our mandatory state climate action goals.

LD 589 directs the PUC to conduct a study and provide a plan for beneficial electrification—a concept that is foundational in achieving a low-carbon future and, as the name suggests, is beneficial to all. As defined in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 35-A, section 10102, subsection 3-A, "Beneficial electrification" means electrification that provides a benefit to a utility, a ratepayer or the environment, without causing harm to utilities, ratepayers or the environment, by improving the efficiency of the electricity grid or reducing consumer costs or emissions, including carbon emissions.<sup>1</sup> TNC supports a plan to achieve this.

LD 589 would also require the Public Utilities Commission to investigate grid-enhancing technologies that could minimize the need for investment in new grid

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/35-a/title35-Asec10102.html>

infrastructure. There is significant research showing the efficiency gains and cost reduction associated with utilizing grid-enhancing technologies.

A U.S. Department of Energy report from 2022 found that grid-enhancing technologies succeed at cost-effectively integrating renewable generation and saving rate-payers money, but that the exact results are “highly location-specific”.<sup>2</sup> An investigation by the PUC into which grid-enhancing technologies would work well in Maine is needed. We know that significant upgrades to the aging transmission infrastructure in Maine are necessary to meet the growing demand for electricity, and LD 589 will require the PUC to investigate and implement ways to get more out of the transmission we already have.

LD 589 is a critical step toward achieving our statewide climate objectives in a way that is most cost-effective for Mainers. We urge this committee to support LD 589. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2022-04/Grid%20Enhancing%20Technologies%20-%20A%20Case%20Study%20on%20Ratepayer%20Impact%20-%20February%202022%20CLEAN%20as%20of%20032322.pdf>