

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ENERGY, UTILITIES AND TECHNOLOGY
COMMITTEE, January 23, 2024

LD 2077 An Act Regarding Customer Costs and the Environmental and
Health Effects of Natural Gas
-In Opposition-

Good afternoon, Senate Chair Lawrence, House Chair Zeigler and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology. My name is Tim Curtis and I am the Administrator for Somerset County Maine.

In my current role as County Administrator, I seek to serve the best interests for the residents of Somerset County. As such, the economic well-being of the County is a priority. **I submit testimony against LD 2077 An Act Regarding Customer Costs and the Environmental and Health Effects of Natural Gas.** In my former work as Town Manager of Madison, Maine from 2015 through 2023, I witnessed firsthand the important role natural gas infrastructure plays in recruiting and maintaining industry.

The 2015 expansion of a natural gas pipeline in the Kennebec Valley region anchored at two Madison locations: Backyard Farms (BYF) and the former Madison Paper Industries. With 44 acres of tomato greenhouses, BYF continues to be the town's largest employer while providing millions of pounds of tomatoes to vendors throughout the Northeast.

When Madison Paper closed in 2016, having natural gas on site made a huge difference in the ability to market and draw new development and jobs back to the area. I am pleased to say that Timber HP by GO-Labs is operating a wood-fiber insulation plant on that site, utilizing the natural gas to operate the boilers necessary to their process.

LD 2077 is bad policy for the State of Maine and Somerset County because it is short sighted. Maine's energy needs continue to grow and the well-intended efforts to develop more solar and wind cannot meet demand. Why eliminate a viable option that is already in place and working effectively?

Timber HP is a perfect example of 'green' manufacturing with a goal of being a carbon neutral while utilizing the natural gas on site. The products they are producing are far superior to the petroleum 'foam' based insulation currently being used in construction when it comes to the impact on our environment. LD 2077 will hamper further development of forward-looking manufacturing.

The Governor's Office has consistently supported and praised Timber HP for their efforts. It seems counterintuitive that the Office would support LD 2077 as it would hamstring further development.

In conclusion, eliminating natural gas expansion in Maine is bad policy for the state and puts our economic development at a disadvantage. At the very least, please consider further study on this matter before enacting legislation.

Respectfully submitted by:

Tim Curtis – County Administrator
Somerset County Maine