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January 22, 2024

Senate Chair Lawrence, House Chair Zeigler and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce (MMCC), the sixth largest chamber in the state representing approximately 645 companies and organizations from twenty-three communities in the greater Waterville area, to express MMCC's opposition to LD 2077, An Act Regarding Customer Costs and the Environmental and Health Effects of Natural Gas.

In order to reduce our regional carbon footprint as well as lowering costs to business and homeowners, Mid-Maine Chamber advocated for the expansion of natural gas into our region. We were able to assist our papermills, Huhtamaki and SAPPI, as well as our hospitals, colleges, and other area business – in particular manufacturers -- in the region. At the time, the gas company made its investment based on the ability to build out in phases. This legislation would in effect nullify that agreement and prevent the gas company's ability to fully realize its initial investment. Breaking our promise is not the type of message to incoming businesses that we want to send to those looking to expand into the state of Maine.

Moreover, Mid-Maine Chamber has areas that we seek to grow with new business investment and development, where we were deliberate about bringing natural gas up to its doorstep. We use this access to natural gas as a selling point to attract new growth. Without the ability to expand into this acreage and neighborhoods, we lose that incentive.

In conclusion, we understand that natural gas is not a permanent solution to our energy needs in mid-Maine. It's a gap energy source, that is less harmful to the environment than burning oil. We believe that we have a distance to go before achieving carbon neutrality, including increasing capacity, battery storage capabilities, and massive infrastructure upgrades. Our manufacturers require the consistency and 24-hour reliability that natural gas provides. Natural gas is the most desirable short-term solution to affordably meet our energy needs. With these points in mind, we stand firm on our opposition to LD 2077.

Sincerely,

Kimberly N. Lindlöf
President & CEO

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