



MAINE'S LEADING
VOICE FOR HEALTHCARE

TESTIMONY OF THE MAINE HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

In Opposition To

LD 2077: *An Act Regarding Customer Costs and the Environmental and Health Effects of Natural Gas*

January 23, 2024

Chairman Lawrence, Chairman Zeigler, and members of the committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, my name is Jeff Austin, and I am offering this testimony in opposition to *LD 2077 An Act Regarding Customer Costs and the Environmental and Health Effects of Natural Gas*. The Maine Hospital Association (MHA) represents all 36 community-governed hospitals including 33 non-profit general acute care hospitals, 2 private psychiatric hospitals, and 1 acute rehabilitation hospital.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Life Safety Code (also called NFPA 101) specifies that any medical-care facility with life-support dependent patients must install and maintain hospital backup-generator emergency solutions. Life critical equipment must be restored within 10 seconds of disruption.

For many of our members we utilize natural gas as a backup energy source, if not a primary source. We understand this legislation would allow for incumbent natural gas companies to maintain their footprint in current territories, however, MHA would not support taking this alternative energy source off the table for members who currently don't have access to natural gas but could in the future. Our members, and it's more acute in rural areas, cannot afford to have fewer energy solutions at their disposal. Limiting energy option could be placing the care of our patients in jeopardy.

While geothermal heat pumps and electric boilers are good options for some uses, they are currently not an economically viable alternative to meet the steam loads required for hospital operations.

Thank you for your time.