

Date: January 23, 2024

To: Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee

From: Cole Cochrane, Maine Youth Action

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 2077, An Act Regarding Customer Costs and Environmental and Health Effects of Natural Gas



Senator Lawrence, Representative Ziegler and the honorable members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee: My name is Cole Cochrane, I am the Policy Director at Maine Youth Action, an organization that represents hundreds of young Mainers from across the state with various backgrounds. I am also currently a freshman in college. Today I am here to testify in support of LD 2077, An Act Regarding Customer Costs and Environmental and Health Effects of Natural Gas.

I want to first sincerely thank Rep. Zeigler for sponsoring this ambitious yet necessary piece of legislation. I understand to take a step like this requires a lot of courage so I hope as a voice for our youth, our testimony is able to motivate you to continue advocating for fundamental change. With respect to the rest of the committee, I hope our organization's testimony may provide some gravity to the situation we face if we do not pass LD 2077. Sometimes when we face a transformative and high-level decision, such as the bill in front of us today, we forget the very real impact it has on many generations to come.

First and foremost, we all know what role natural gas, and more broadly fossil fuels, has in our future energy system: they will inevitably become a minute and insignificant portion of our energy supply. The reasons for this trajectory are quite plain- fossil fuels are a detriment to public health, exacerbate the climate crisis and threaten our livelihoods and existence. My generation in particular knows this all too well. Toxic air pollutants from natural gas leave us vulnerable to respiratory disorders and asthma.¹ Additionally, air pollution caused by fossil fuel production has resulted in the deaths of 8.7

¹https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/c-change/subtopics/fossil-fuels-health/?active_tab=1&articles_page=4&research_page=2#:~:text=But%20burning%20them%20creates%20climate,spectrum%20disorder%20and%20Alzheimer's%20disease.

million annually according to the Harvard School of Public Health. If the committee does not consider negative health impacts on our youth to be of significance, instead consider how the continuance of fossil fuel production affects our livelihoods: after all, critical natural resource industries are all under attack from a rapidly changing climate. Based on a report from the International Labor Organization, 80 million jobs are at risk from climate change by 2030 alone: to clarify, that is only 6 years. The same report indicates an economic loss of \$2.4 trillion within that time period.² Therefore, as my generation slowly becomes the bulk of the workforce, our livelihoods are burdened with volatility, instability and uncertainty because of fossil fuel production. If it is not clear already, fossil fuel production places heavy burdens on my generation that worsens our health, prosperity and simply threatens our way of life.

I understand this problem is on a global scale and composed of numerous contributing factors; however, we know that natural gas is a part of it. There is an imperative in our state to mitigate the climate crisis, a responsibility all decision makers share, ranging from private sector leaders to politicians. We must shape our public policy to reflect as such and to guarantee my generation a bright future we deserve. LD 2077 is systemically transformative, beneficial to the public and holds a good deal of merit. For the reasons elaborated in this testimony, Maine Youth Action urges the committee to vote “ought to pass” on LD 2077.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cole Cochrane

² https://www.voanews.com/a/economy-business_ilo-climate-change-will-lead-huge-job-economic-losses/6170891.html