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***Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology***

**RE: LD 2214** – An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government: Governor’s Energy Office Allocations

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, 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 support the supplemental budget proposal for the Governor’s Energy Office (GEO).**

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. The Nature Conservancy 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. We also work across Maine to restore rivers and streams, partner with fishermen in the Gulf of Maine to rebuild groundfish populations, and develop innovative solutions to address our changing climate.

The GEO is leading the charge in fighting climate change and facilitating our state’s just transition to clean energy in a way that supports Maine’s ratepayers, businesses, and environment. They have worked to help our state become a leader in renewable energy and have strongly positioned us to be a national leader in offshore wind development.

Beyond this work, they have led task forces, published reports, pursued federal grants, and led stakeholder groups to ensure we use innovative and unique solutions to address climate change. TNC has been honored to be a part of this office’s ambitious and thoughtful efforts in the past.

This year’s budget proposes to continue and make permanent three Public Service Coordinator positions, one to manage industry and higher education sector engagement, one to support workforce development initiatives and related grant management, programming, and communications, and one to advance grid modernization efforts and coordinate programs related to the Infrastructure, Investment, and Jobs Act (IIJA). All three of these positions are needed to advance the capacity of the GEO to carry out the important work of their office for the benefit of all Mainers.

We thank Governor Mills and Director Burgess for putting forward this budget proposal, and we strongly urge the Committee’s support.