

Senator Mark Lawrence & Representative Melanie Sachs
Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology
Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology:

I am writing to express my opposition to LD 32, LD 257, LD 450, and LD 515, which aim to eliminate our state's longstanding practice of net metering. This practice provides fair compensation to the thousands of Mainers, like myself, who generate their own energy to power our homes.

As my wife and I entered our retirement phase, we purchased a home in Bangor with the intention of making it as energy self-sufficient as possible. This included installing heat pumps and a rooftop solar system capable of covering our annual energy costs. We did this with the understanding that we could bank unused credits, allowing us to meet our home's daily energy needs during the less efficient winter months.

In addition to reducing energy costs and avoiding rising utility bills, we value being energy independent, supporting local energy sources over imported fossil fuels, contributing to the clean energy transition, aiding our state in meeting its climate goals, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These actions are taken to ensure a better life for our grandchildren who live in Maine.

We participate in the Net Energy Billing's kilowatt-hour credit program alongside 77,000 other Mainers. It is concerning that lawmakers are proposing to reverse a commitment the State of Maine has made. This political expediency by some members will harm not only the investments many Mainers have made in installing rooftop solar panels, but also the state's long-term clean energy transition utilizing Maine-made energy.

The Public Utilities Commission's report on the costs and benefits of Maine's 2023 Net Energy Billing Program highlights the overwhelming benefits of the kilowatt-hour credit program. Every dollar invested in NEB generates \$1.23 in benefits, including both tangible economic and environmental benefits, as well as "avoided costs"—for example, without solar, we would need to import more fossil fuels, raising electricity rates even further.

Furthermore, it is frustrating that solar is continually blamed for rising electric bills when the reality is that our region's reliance on natural gas is driving energy cost increases. Solar energy programs account for less than 5% of the average residential electric bill, while in 2023, natural gas accounted for 60%. Blaming solar and the investments my family has made, which directly benefits the grid, is misleading. Clean energy is lowering the overall price of electricity, creating net benefits for all Mainers. Solar isn't the problem—fossil fuel volatility is.

As one of the thousands of residential solar customers in our state, I urge you to oppose these bills.

Thank you for your consideration,

Christopher Bell
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