

Karen Marysdaughter  
Bangor  
LD 32

Testimony in opposition to LD 32, LD 257, LD 359, and LD 450.

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology. My name is Karen Marysdaughter, a resident of Bangor.

My partner and I installed solar panels when we moved to our home in Bangor in 2015. Our motivation to do so was in part because of the horrific effects of climate change, effects which we are witnessing every day on the news. Investing in clean energy was one thing we could do to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and the havoc they are causing.

The other part of our motivation was to provide some financial stability for our senior years. By living frugally we were able to save enough money to purchase our solar array, which would in effect pre-pay most of our energy costs for our remaining lifetimes. Net energy billing (NEB) was an important factor in our financial decision. We are now both above the age of 70 and living solely on Social Security, along with my 95 year old mother, and happy to have stabilized energy costs.

Opponents of NEB claim it is driving up the cost of electricity for all rate payers. The PUC's report, "Status and Cost & Benefit Analysis of Maine's 2023 Solar Market," makes it clear that the cost of NEB is only a very small portion of any electricity rate increases, and that the financial benefits of NEB and solar energy outweigh the costs. Meanwhile, what about all the externalized costs of burning fossil fuels? The air pollution and associated health effects, wildfires, floods, wind damage, droughts, heat waves? What about the massive subsidies that the fossil fuel industry has enjoyed for decades? If all those costs were added to our electric rates, our bills would be astronomical, but because we are paying for them with our taxes and with the cost of living, they are hidden. The only way the NEB opponents can, with a straight face, make a financial argument for eliminating NEB is by totally and willfully ignoring the actual costs of fossil fuels. The double standard applied to solar energy vs fossil fuels makes my blood boil.

If net energy billing and the property tax exemption on solar panels are rolled back it will discourage the necessary transition away from fossil fuels to clean energy, and will have a significant negative impact on our fixed income household. My partner and I made our decision in good faith, based on the systems in place at that time. Are you now going to pull the rug out from under our feet?