

SPRUCE MOUNTAIN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Regional School Unit No. 73

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

February 25, 2025

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology:

My name is Scott Albert, and I am the Superintendent of Spruce Mountain School District, RSU 73, which serves the communities of Jay, Livermore, and Livermore Falls. We serve a student population of approximately 1400 students, have over 280 dedicated employees, and operate and maintain five facilities, our high school, middle school, elementary school, primary school and central office/adult education building.

In the past few years, as our electricity rates have continued to climb and make up a significant portion of our operations budget, we began to seek other opportunities for more stable, reliable electricity costs. This led us to exploring solar, and in December 2021, RSU 73 became an off taker alongside many other school districts for a solar project right in our backyard, in Livermore Falls. Ninety-six percent of the installation's energy serves schools in our region, and we are proud to keep our energy dollars right here, in our local economy.

Spruce Mountain has signed a 20-year Net Energy Billing Agreement, and to date, since the time of our first credits in December 2021, our school district has saved close to \$330,000 in electricity costs. To be clear, this has resulted in major savings within our budget during a time when energy costs have continued to climb.

Our investment in solar was not only made to showcase our commitment to our students' future and begin our journey to being carbon neutral, but because fiscal prudence is critically important, and this project will continue to save taxpayer dollars for years to come. These savings allow our district to efficiently maintain our facilities as well as provide services for students while reducing our taxpayer burden, which is especially important in rural Maine communities as so many costs continue to rise.

I am writing today in opposition to LD 32 and LD 257 as they would entirely repeal our state's Net Energy Billing program, in which we participate. While the legislation does not specifically say, one can assume that if the Public Utilities Commission cannot allow a utility to compensate a customer-generator, our 20-year agreement would be terminated, just a few years in. We would be left scrambling and our district—and our taxpayers—would be responsible for making up a gap of hundreds of thousands of dollars in our current budget, all out of cycle. It's not hard to see the immense challenge and fiscal harm this would create.

For Spruce Mountain, the five Maine school districts within our local array, and the many, many school districts across the state that have invested in clean energy to reduce their energy costs at a time when balancing and passing a school budget is incredibly difficult—I urge you to vote no on LD 32 and LD 257.

Sincerely,

Scott Albert

Superintendent

RSU 73 - Spruce Mountain School District
Jay, Livermore, and Livermore Falls