

February 24, 2025

Honorable Senator Mark Lawrence, Chair
Honorable Representative Melanie Sachs, Chair
And esteemed members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 32, LD 257, LD 450 and LD 515 Support

Dear Chairs and Members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology,

As a recent retired economic development professional, I am submitting my support for LD's 32, 257, 450 and 515 in hopes that one or more of these bills can be enacted to end, or dramatically alter, the current net energy billing program.

When LD1711 was originally passed, nobody anticipated the future adverse ratepayer impact, and that impact is now very evident in all Maine ratepayers' monthly electric bills. Everyone has been impacted by these electric bill hikes from our low-income residents, unable to withstand this new 'Public Policy Charge', to our largest energy users who employ thousands of Maine workers. This added electric tax is causing hardships all across Maine, while lucrative cash windfalls are being paid to out-of-state solar developers off the backs of Mainers.

I spent years attempting to attract out-of-state investors to Northern Maine and the two factors that made this task extremely difficult were labor force and electric rates. Maine continues to be in the top 5 highest cost states for electricity and that kills economic development. Aroostook County relies on farming and forestry as our two primary economic drivers, and we must process those goods to maximize economic output. Processing wood and agricultural products takes an incredible amount of electricity. Given Maine's ever-increasing electric rates, this is pushing our manufacturers to consider closing their facilities and moving operations to more affordable energy states or neighboring provinces. This would be devastating to Aroostook County and our other rural counties if businesses pull out because many of our Maine counties rely on a natural resource-based economy.

Guardrails should have been put on the cost and amount of solar generation when LD 1711 was originally passed in 2019. It's too late now as, according to our Public Advocate, we are forecasted to pay a \$220 million annual tax, recently updated to \$240 million. This subsidy is 2-3X higher than required to attract solar development at generation levels commensurate with current load. Our Northern Maine grid has a load of only around 100 megawatts yet, due to this exorbitant solar subsidy, we already have 113 megawatts of net energy billed solar in service and another 35-45 megawatts with interconnection agreements or cluster study approvals expected to come online in 2025.

This overgeneration drastically impacts our ratepayers because we need to sell this power into the wholesale market where it is bought for less than a quarter of what the developers are currently being paid to produce it. This is wrong in all ways. It is especially unfair to the

residents and businesses forced to pay these penalties in Versant's Maine Public District where we have a disproportionately higher share of the wave of solar development in Maine, brought on by the passage of LD 1711.

Simply moving taxpayer money around by increasing funding for our Low Income Assistance Program does nothing to address the root cause- the high-cost of generation for Net Energy Billing.

I urge you to vote to end or significantly modify the current net energy billing program before these 'Public Policy Charges' create devastating economic impacts on our rural Maine economy.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this high-profile and challenging issue.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Loub". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fort Fairfield, Maine