

Doretta Colburn
Waterford
LD 359

Senator Mark Lawrence, Representative Melanie Sachs, and members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee:

My name is Doretta Colburn, I am a resident of Waterford where my husband and I own a farm on which we grow a variety of vegetables and fruits for personal use and sale, raise laying hens and make artisan bread in our commercial kitchen. Because we have been able to retain one of the few operating farms in our community partly due to the energy savings we have acquired through investing in solar, we have been able to continue supplying fresh produce, eggs, and breads to our village. Losing the savings that net metering has offered would put increased burden on our ability to continue our business. That is why I am writing to oppose LD 359.

As a farmer, I've learned to make choices even when they are difficult ones.

Sometimes it is facing a decision to put down an animal that is not well or changing course when circumstances present themselves that shift our plans. Many times these are costly, but they are always the right thing to do. That's how we felt when, in order to help offset our energy costs, we made the investment in solar panels on our barn roof and a solar tracker in one of our fields. It was not an easy decision, but I still believe the best one for ourselves and for those who ultimately benefit from the responsible use of our resources. It was an expensive endeavor, but the prospects of future savings enabled us to find the means to make it happen. Without making that choice when we did, the necessary costs surrounding our farm operation would call into question our ability to sustain our 6-generation farm. Being able to reduce the cost of electricity that powers the fences surrounding our pastures, the fans that are critical to operating our high tunnel greenhouses, the well pumps that supply our waterers, the freezers and refrigeration important for safe food storage and the ovens in our bakery, has given us a chance at retaining our farm for the next generation. That is especially encouraging when, as farms are disappearing from our landscape at a rapid pace, we have been able to keep ours going and supporting our local community.

We have been encouraged by the savings we receive in making power from the sun and the goodness we feel that any excess goes to the CMP grid benefiting others in energy savings and reducing the need for fossil fuels that threaten the clean air we so value in our pristine state of Maine. It is a win for consumers and a win for Maine. Our savings has come at a cost that would not have been possible for us to risk without the support our laws have afforded us. For this we have been grateful and encouraged by others making similar choices that benefit our communities and state because I believe our life choices are not solely about ourselves, but about the overall good.

To remove the benefits that we made our decision trusting would be there, will put us in financial jeopardy and reduce our ability to continue providing our community in the same way we do today. I encourage you to oppose LD 359.