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Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology

RE: LD 359—An Act to Prevent Net Energy Billing by Certain Customers

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology, my name is Karen Blakelock and I work as the climate and energy policy advisor for the Nature Conservancy in Maine. **I appreciate this opportunity to testify in opposition to LD 359.**

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that both nature and people can thrive. We work in more than 70 countries, and we use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners.

Electricity costs in Maine are a concern for many Maine households and business and the net energy billing program has been unfairly scapegoated as the cause. It has become an easy target, as on July 1, 2024, customers saw an increase in monthly fixed costs on their electric bills. However, when reading beyond the headlines, it becomes clear that Maine's investments in renewable energy have counteracted the cost increases driven by over-reliance on fossil fuels. Renewable energy generation provides an opportunity for price stability, while in-state generation from sources like solar and wind help keep dollars in our state.¹ A 2024 report on Maine's Renewable Portfolio Standard found that Maine ratepayers have saved more than \$21 million per year as a result, and the state has seen more than \$100 million in direct investments.²

At the Nature Conservancy, we consider our work within the scope of the three C's—conservation, community, and climate. We know that to meet the necessary emissions reductions to avoid the worst impacts of climate change we must build out renewable energy rapidly, but we must ensure we're doing it in the right places that minimize impacts to the natural environment, and in a way that considers costs to Maine households. The net energy billing program in Maine has and will continue to benefit the people of Maine, as continued investment in well-sited renewable energy is essential to create a future where both people and nature can thrive.

I ask that you vote **Ought Not to Pass on LD 359**. I am happy to answer any questions now or in the future.

¹ <https://www.maine.gov/energy/electricity-prices>

² <https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov.energy/files/inline-files/Maine-RPS-Impacts-and-Procurement-Policy-Options-Report-Master-FINAL.pdf>