



# Brooks, Inc.

211 Beechwood Street  
Thomaston, Maine 04861

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 27, 2025

Testimony in Opposition to LD 32, "An Act to Repeal the Laws Regarding Net Energy Billing," LD 257, "An Act to Eliminate the Practice of Net Energy Billing," LD 450, "An Act to Lower Electricity Costs by Repealing the Laws Governing Net Energy Billing," and LD 515 "An Act to Reverse Recent Changes Made to the Law Governing Net Energy Billing and Distributed Generation" from Brooks Trap Mill, div. of Brooks, Inc.

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

We understand that today you are considering making major changes to our state's solar policy. Before we dig into why that matters to us—a small business that has now grown to have locations in Thomaston, Bath, Jonesboro, Portland, Friendship, and Columbia Falls, we'd like to take a moment to share our story with you. We were founded by my grandfather, Michael Brooks, in 1946. When his son, my father Karl Brooks, returned from serving in the US Navy during WWII, he got his doctorate in psychology and taught at university. When Karl returned to Maine for a visit in 1973, he and his brother chose to set up a trap stock mill to serve the fisherman of our great state. In 1986, when my father took over the company, he was proud to be running a one stop shop for all lobster traps and lobstering supplies. Over the years, we've become the largest lobster trap producer in the State of Maine. Today, we are proud to have over 100 employees as part of the Brooks Trap Mill family.

Our growth has led to the need for warehouse facilities, which we use for product storage as well as an area for trap production. By 2007, we had three warehouses, with over 45,000 square feet, where we strive to stock the largest inventory of lobstering materials in the industry. The management of energy costs for these facilities is a major concern of our business operations given the rapidly rising and volatile electric rates here in New England.

That's why, in 2019, we chose to install a 76kW AC solar array on our warehouse in Thomaston. The power which we produce helps run our store, warehouse, and trap shop in Thomaston. We were proud to have secured a federal Rural Electricity for America Program (REAP) grant through the United States Department of Agriculture to help us, a rural business, cover the costs of installation. Not only has this resulted in our ability to better manage our energy costs, but we also feel strongly about its contribution to the health of the Gulf of Maine by producing carbon-free energy. As a generational family-owned business building the majority of lobster traps and a considerable amount of aquaculture gear, our decision to install solar helps us to stay competitive and keep prices under control for Maine fisherman.

We understand that the legislature is considering eliminating the state's net energy billing program—under which our solar array operates. To say this would be devastating to the investment



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we made would be an understatement. It would make the investments made by business owners like us, who have taken on financing and installing renewable energy onsite to address our energy costs, essentially void overnight. If we understand the bills correctly, the legislature would essentially be requiring us to give away the energy we generate to our electric utility. As it seems to us that electric utilities' sole purpose is to purchase and distribute energy, it only makes sense that they would purchase energy from us small producers, as well as the large ones.

While we understand there are costs to the program, we remind the Committee of the very tangible economic and environmental benefits that all Mainers are receiving from the clean energy that net energy billing program participants have installed. We also understand some businesses have been disproportionately impacted by costs. We agree that this aspect of the plan should be addressed, and we ask the Public Utilities Commission to address rate design instead of getting rid of the program altogether.

I strongly urge all committee members to vote no on these bills, which would have major impacts on businesses like ours serving communities around the state. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Julie Brooks  
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