

Maine Joint Legislature Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology
Via electronic submission
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

March 8, 2025

To Committee Members,

I am writing in regards to L.D. 596 a resolve related to legislative approval of Northern Maine transmission, being presented to the committee on March 11, 2025. Please see my comments below:

1. "On November 2, 2021, Maine voters approved, by virtue of a referendum, L.D. 1295 (I.B. 1) (130th Legis. 2021), "An Act To Require Legislative Approval of Certain Transmission Lines and Facilities and Other Project on Public Reserved Lands and Prohibit the Construction of Certain Transmission Lines in the Upper Kennebec Region" (the Referendum). The Referendum approval results in a combination of amendments to existing statutory sections in Titles 12 and 35-A of Maine law and several new sections of Title 35-A." *(See footnote 1 below for reference)*
2. "The approved Referendum contains multiple components, including the requirement of legislative approval of a high-impact transmission line, either by a majority or 2/3 vote, depending on the location." "... the Referendum requires legislative approval of all such lines in the State prior to construction. A high-impact transmission line crossing or utilizing public lands must be approved by a 2/3 vote of both the House and Senate; all other high-impact transmission lines must be approved by a majority vote." *(See footnote 1 below for reference)*
3. On June 22, 2023 Governor Mills approved L.D. 924 a Resolve, to Provide Legislative Approval of the Transmission Project Selected by the Public Utilities Commission Pursuant to the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program. Of note, this resolve indicated that the PUC approved transmission line and facilities for the project on November 1, 2022 and February 3, 2023. It also indicated that the route of the transmission project had not been finalized. *(See footnote 2 below for reference)*
4. On June 29, 2023 I received a letter in the mail from LS Power Grid Maine notifying me that this transmission project may impact property that I own depending on the route chosen. Please note that the receipt of this letter was 7 days after the Governor approved L.D. 924, which at that time of approval of L.D. 924 the route of the transmission project is stated to have not been finalized. It is my understanding that at the time of the approval of L.D. 924 the legislature was also not aware of the routes being proposed by LS Power, yet as you can see from the timing above, the proposed routes were already drawn up by LS Power.
5. On or about December 21, 2023 the PUC cancelled the transmission line and facilities project referenced in L.D. 924. *(See footnote 3 below for reference)*

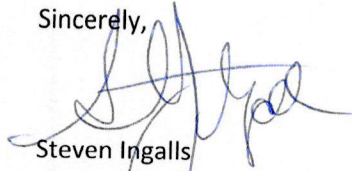
6. During the Spring of 2024, myself and many others attended EUT committee meetings to express our concerns relative to the previously approved, then cancelled, project and offered input to the EUT committee for 1) L.D. 1963 An Act Regarding the Future of Renewable Energy Transmission in Northern Maine and 2) L.D. 2087 An Act to Protect Property Owners by Making Certain Changes to the Laws Governing the Use of Eminent Domain by Transmission and Distribution Utilities. I vividly recall one young couple from Etna who testified before the EUT committee describing their concerns (I dare say horror) of learning from a neighbor that their property was one of many that was proposed to have this transmission line built on. Having just purchased the property recently, and looking forward to settling into their new home, their dreams were shattered. I suspect many of the current EUT committee members who were in attendance that day recall their moving testimony. If not, I highly recommend watching the recorded video from that day. *(see footnote 4 & 5 below)*
7. During these Spring 2024 meetings there was ample opportunities for parties to express a request that the legislature approve a resolve similar to that now proposed in L.D. 596 or that previously approved by L.D. 1295. To the best of my knowledge that request was never made and no such legislation was proposed.
8. As of this writing, the PUC has not issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) as directed in L.D. 1963. It is however noted, that at the request of NESCOE, the ISO-NE is expected to issue an RFP for transmission construction/upgrades from an area in or near Pittsfield south to NH that is intended to support, in part, the intent of L.D. 1963. The likely timeframe for selection of a bidder by NESCOE and ISO-NE is around September 2026. It is my understanding that at some future point in time the PUC may issue an RFP for a transmission line and facilities north of Pittsfield, but there is currently no timeline for when this may occur.

Now comes before us L.D. 596. A request to have the legislature approve a yet to be issued RFP for the construction and operation of transmission infrastructure to interconnect renewable energy resources in northern Maine with the ISO-NE electric grid. A request to approve a yet issued RFP, yet unknown bidder selected, yet unknown project design, yet unknown route and yet unknown cost. In my words a request to just sign a blank check of approval.

I have taken the time to layout the above events in hopes that those new to the EUT committee, and those who have a longer tenure on the EUT committee, will realize that the timing of L.D. 596 is, in my words, putting the cart before the horse. An argument may be made that potential bidders for some future RFP related to L.D. 1963 might prefer to have what is proposed in L.D. 596 in hand before going through the expense of forming a bid. I get it. I call that a cost of doing business. I will also point out that when the PUC issued their original RFP for the northern Maine project, my understanding is there were multiple bidders, including LS Power. I'm sure LS Power and others would have preferred to have had the legislatures approval before going through the process/cost of forming their bid, but that didn't stop them from doing so.

I would hope that we have all learned some valuable lessons from what happened over the last few years and that one of those lessons is that rushing things such as this often causes unnecessary or unforeseen mistakes, oversights, delays and costs. I would also hope that the EUT committee, and the legislature, would be that extra set of eyes for all Maine residents, that the voter initiated L.D. 1295 presumably intended. I will also bring attention to the fact that the Natural Resources Council of Maine supported L.D. 1295. (*see footnote 6 below*). I further hope that the EUT committee and legislature will thoughtfully review all of the information that a bidder selected by the PUC will offer in a future RFP. Then the EUT committee and the legislature can take a thoughtful and fully informed vote on L.D. 596. A time and a place will likely one day come for a vote on L.D. 596, but that time has not yet come, in my opinion. I hope you will support me in voting to either table L.D. 596 or vote ought not to pass (at this time).

Sincerely,



Steven Ingalls

Stetson, ME

Footnotes:

1. DEP License Suspension Proceeding Decision and Order dated November 23, 2021. [20211123final-order-cmp.pdf](#)
2. L.D. 924, A Resolve to Provide Legislative Approval of the Transmission Project [getPDF.asp](#)
3. Portland Press Herald article regarding cancellation of LS Power award
<https://www.pressherald.com/2023/12/21/state-regulators-kill-transmission-line-wind-deal-from-northern-maine-to-new-england-grid/>
4. [L.D. 1963](#), An Act Regarding the Future of Renewable Energy [getPDF.asp](#)
5. L.D. 2087, An Act To Protect Property Owners [getPDF.asp](#)
6. NRCM support for L.D. 1295, [2021-legislative-bill-tracking.pdf](#)