

Maine Joint Legislative Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology

Testimony Re: LD 596 Resolve, to Provide Legislative Approval of Northern Maine Transmission Infrastructure

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and Members of the Committee,

On June 29, 2023, my family received a letter that changed our lives. The letter, along with a map, informed me that our property was on or near a proposed high-voltage transmission line. What followed was a complete shift in my focus—learning everything I could about this project, Maine law, energy infrastructure, and project impacts on rural communities, and then sharing what I learned with others.

I started a social media group and an online newsletter, both of which grew rapidly as so many people, like me, were desperate for information. The developer's open houses were offering only small snippets of information, so I began filling in the gaps and sharing what I learned. Along the way, I met others who were doing the same. We joined forces, formed a nonprofit group, and worked tirelessly to find an attorney who wasn't conflicted. We met with elected representatives, drafted and supported legislation to protect property owners from eminent domain, and held community meetings with residents and officials along the proposed routes.

I spent countless hours watching recordings of legislative hearings and reading project documents to understand how this project and its routes were chosen. We talked with the Public Advocate, utility representatives, PUC members, appraisers, engineers, and experts from other states. We learned how other states are addressing energy infrastructure needs while balancing the protection of property rights and the preservation of our beautiful landscapes.

The moment I learned about the planned transmission line, I was devastated. This home, the one my husband and I had dreamed of for decades, was supposed to be our sanctuary. It was supposed to be the place we could raise our family in peace. But suddenly, it felt like that dream was being ripped away.

How did my life change? I'm a homeschooling mom, but now I read energy studies while also trying to teach my kids. I'm a self-employed seamstress, but now while I sew, I listen to ISO PAC meetings, GEO presentations, and PUC deliberations—slowing my production time. A few years ago, I picked up oil painting, but now instead of creating art, I'm creating spreadsheets. My three-ring binders, once filled with recipes and gardening notes, are now crammed with Maine statutes, proposed legislation, and energy reports. Dozens of ideas for growing my business have been put on hold because I'm focused on finding the best path

forward for energy infrastructure in Maine and protecting other families from experiencing the threat of poorly planned projects. I gave up my volunteer work, and my kids now refer to these last 20 months as my “Transmission Line Era.” And I’m just one person—more than 3,000 others received those same letters.

LD 596 would push the same devastation upon thousands of families across Maine. This bill seeks to approve a high-voltage transmission line without answering the most basic questions: Who is the developer? What are the benefits? What will it cost? Where will it be routed? What is the design? What alternatives have been considered? These questions remain unanswered, yet the bill seeks to approve a project shrouded in uncertainty.

Most importantly, the bill would disregard the will of the Maine voters, who voted in favor of requiring legislative approval for high-impact transmission lines, expecting that approval to be given only after a project is fully vetted. Approving a project without this necessary review is a direct contradiction of that vote.

For all these reasons, I urge you to reject LD 596. Please don’t allow this unknown and unvetted project to move forward without answering the critical questions that will affect the lives of so many people.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Tanya Blanchard
Mom, Grandmom, Homemaker, and
Protector of not only my little corner of Thorndike but all of rural Maine