



# Maine Conservation Voters

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## **Testimony in support of LD810, *An Act Regarding the Approval of Transmission Lines***

**March 12, 2025**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs and distinguished member of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, my name is Cathy Breen. I am the Director of Government Affairs at Maine Conservation Voters (MCV), a statewide non-profit organization with 13,000 members and supporters that is building a just, thriving future for all by acting on the climate crisis, protecting the environment, and safeguarding our democracy. I'm speaking in support of LD810, *An Act Regarding Transmission Lines*. MCV's support of this bill rests on two foundational and long-standing priorities:

1. Our commitment to tackling the climate crisis by supporting a just transition to renewable energy in Maine;
2. Our commitment to making clean energy available to all, regardless of economic status.

As Maine looks to advance the climate goals set out in *Maine Won't Wait 2.0*, our energy infrastructure must be a critical focus. Electrifying our largest emitting sectors, transportation and heating/cooling, will require a huge investment in our grid infrastructure to handle increased load and facilitate more renewables. This, in turn, requires building more electric transmission as quickly and affordably as possible. In a sparsely populated state like Maine, the private sector will go only as far as their profit margins will take them, resulting in under-capitalized service areas in much of Aroostook County and other rural counties. Without capacity to transmit energy to the ISO-New England grid, efforts to develop local renewable energy generation have been destined to fail.

Maine has seen this scenario before with respect to another core technology: high speed internet. From roughly 1990-2010, corporate investment built out the technology for market-rate internet access in more populated Maine regions. They did this because of a healthy return on investment for their shareholders. Since then, however, large commercial entities have left huge swaths of Maine unconnected (or poorly connected) because the return on investment was dismal. The cost of cables, signals, wire, labor, maintenance, etc., for the relatively small number of customers simply didn't make economic sense. This reality was harmful to rural Maine's businesses, health care systems, education systems, and so much more, resulting in "the digital divide." And that's why, in 2021, we created the [Maine Connectivity Authority \(MCA\)](#), a

quasi-governmental agency charged with achieving universal access to affordable high-speed broadband in Maine. Focusing on projects, places and people, the MCA is advancing digital equity for all Mainers.

LD810 simply clears a legislative path simply to *consider* public or quasi-public ownership of energy transmission infrastructure in the future. It sets up nothing. It names nothing. It merely removes a hurdle (leftover from the debate over a transmission line in western Maine) that blocks this conversation. Why have this conversation? Because a public or quasi-public transmission authority *might* be able to develop transmission lines for less than a private developer because it wouldn't require the same profit margin, and it would have access to lower borrowing costs. And this might be part of how we meet our state goal of 100% renewable energy by 2040 and do that more affordably. Such a project could potentially connect far flung renewable resources to the ISO-New England grid, keeping energy generation and transmission dollars in Maine. LD810 lets us start these long-term conversations.

For these reasons, MCV encourages you to vote Ought to Pass on LD810. Thank you for your consideration.