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***Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology***

***RE: LD 197—Resolve, to Direct the Governor’s Energy Office to Conduct a Study Regarding the Future of Electric Transmission Infrastructure in the State***

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 neither for nor against LD 197.**

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 use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners.

Our organization is dedicated to solving the interconnected crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. Our vision is for a clean, green, and equitable energy future. We support the rapid transition to renewable energy, but we are focused on how to do it correctly from the start. We must deploy renewable energy and transmission infrastructure in ways consider communities, conservation, and climate.

TNC feels strongly that a study to evaluate the future of electric transmission infrastructure in Maine must include considerations for the environmental, land-use, and community impacts of potential transmission and generation projects.

While we support the rapid build out of transmission infrastructure to meet our clean energy goals, TNC suggests a study on the topic includes analysis of impacts to both communities and wildlife habitats while encouraging development co-located along existing linear infrastructure, and I appreciate that this is mentioned in sec. 1 subsection 4 of the resolve, which highlights the potential use of existing rights-of-way.

Overall, TNC Maine believes that this bill could help create a more informative and engaging public process for all stakeholders and suggests that specific considerations with regards to core habitat conservation be included in section 1 and recommend that the committee consider the following language for an additional sub-bullet:

**"Best practices to avoid, minimize, and mitigate the impacts of electric transmission infrastructure to wildlife habitat."**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment.