



Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
% Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

March 17, 2025

Re: LD 830, *An Act to Protect Maine's Scenic Beauty by Requiring Solar Panel Fields to Be Hidden from View*

Dear Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony in opposition to LD 830, *An Act to Protect Maine's Scenic Beauty by Requiring Solar Panel Fields to Be Hidden from View*, on behalf of the Maine Renewable Energy Association (MREA). MREA is a not-for-profit association of renewable energy producers, suppliers of goods and services to those producers, and other supporters of the industry. Our member companies include wind, solar, hydropower, biomass, and tidal energy generators and developers of such projects, as well as companies that provide services to those producers, such as environmental engineers, electricians, and general contractors.

MREA opposes LD 830 because the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) under the Site Location of Development Law (Site Law) already has the authority to and regulates visual impacts from solar energy development or other applicable development and because visual buffering standards, in our experience, are typically set and regulated at the municipal level.

LD 830 seeks to modify Site Law (Maine's primary environmental permitting law for larger scale development) to require that prior to approving a solar energy development proposal, DEP find that the proposed development be surrounded by a barrier designed to sufficiently conceal it from the view of abutting properties. Site Law already regulates visual impacts through what is known commonly as their "harmonious fit standard". Specifically, Site Law requires that a developer make "adequate provision for fitting the development harmoniously into the existing natural environment and that the development [not] adversely affect existing uses, *scenic character*, air quality, water quality or other natural resources in the municipality or in neighboring municipalities." See 38 MRS §484(3) (emphasis added). This standard is applicable to solar energy development and as such, the legislation's presumed intent is already in effect.

www.renewablemaine.org

Furthermore, Maine municipal ordinances increasingly include land use standards that are specific to or otherwise applicable to solar energy development, including visual impact and/or setback requirements. In addition to MREA's general concern about statewide standards that single out a particular land use, we're concerned that the proposed standard in LD 830 could frustrate individual municipalities' efforts to locate solar projects in their town, realizing tax revenue, energy cost savings, and other benefits.

Maine solar developers desire to be good stewards of the land they occupy, as well as good neighbors. Very often this means designing arrays to reduce visibility and planting vegetation as a visual buffer. For these reasons and more, MREA encourages the Committee to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 830.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Eliza Donoghue".

Eliza Donoghue, Esq.
Executive Director