



Testimony in Support - [L.D. 1270 – An Act to Establish the Department of Energy Resources](#)

Committee on Energy, Utilities, & Technology

April 8, 2025

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of *L.D. 1270 – An Act to Establish the Department of Energy Resources*.

My name is Jeff Marks, Executive Director of ClimateWork Maine (CWM). CWM is an action-oriented organization dedicated to harnessing the tremendous influence of the business community to bridge the gap between the environmental community's quest for ambitious climate and clean energy solutions and strategies and the business community's growing role in moving the climate agenda forward and confronting the climate crisis. CWM helps Maine businesses grow and succeed in a carbon-constrained economy. Our mission is to support businesses, workers, and communities; strengthen partnerships with Maine's private, public, and nonprofit sectors; and support the growth and deployment of climate solutions in operations, products, services, projects, and with sound economic and workforce development strategies.

I've worked with businesses for more than 25 years, including with a Fortune 50 company on the cutting edge of aerospace, buildings, and energy technologies, a national manufacturing association of 14000 large, medium, and small companies, and a state organization supporting Maine's cleantech sector. In 2010 – 2012, after boomeranging back into Maine for my 7th time, I served as the Deputy Director of the Governor's Energy Office.

Having worked in the Energy Office under two Governors – Govs. John Baldacci and Paul LePage – who, at times, were diametrically opposed to each other on energy policy, I believe elevation of the office to Cabinet level will provide improved consistency and accountability across state programs and better service to Maine businesses, citizens, and communities. I had the pleasure of working with two giants in Maine's energy legislative history – John Kerry &

Ken Fletcher. As the office was tiny at that time, John and Ken were constantly running back and forth between their offices and the energy committee hearing room to give testimony, but still managed to take time at the end of every day to answer calls from constituents, engage in short- and long-term energy planning, and serve their Governors with expertise (and patience).

When I left in 2012, there were only two of us in the office managing a \$30 million state energy program. By making climate and clean energy priorities in her Administration, Governor Mills has transformed the office into a leading powerhouse among states on these issues with a portfolio in the hundreds of millions of dollars. As good as it is, it's not nearly enough.

The Energy Office is often the first point of contact for businesses seeking investments in energy improvements, communities and nonprofits advocating for environmental changes, and constituents struggling to heat their homes and keep their lights on. This transition to a more stable department outside of the Governor's Office will enable the office to give better advice, guidance, and assistance regarding energy policies, projects, and investments, but most importantly, a clearer path for citizens to access the resources they need to live comfortably and safely.

Maine has a robust constituency supporting environmental and energy issues, strong backing for new innovative technologies, and an enabling professional support services and nonprofit community. However, access to capital and investment can be problematic, and geographic distances and access to out-of-state resources are a challenge. Maine is a small-business state which could benefit from an energy department that has full and unfettered access to financial, intellectual, and technical support and investment in energy innovations and programs. Companies are often not aware of all the resources available to them and individually lack the ability to scale up to meet market needs. While the current energy office is doing an amazing job, we need to maintain more consistency across political administrations with an energy department at the cabinet level that can help businesses better access resources can help them attract visibility, investment, and demand for their technologies and services.

A robust energy cabinet department will also be better prepared to support businesses in a climate-change-constrained economy, whether they are looking to manufacture clean energy products and technologies, contribute to modern buildings and transportation systems, seek beneficial use and stewardship of our natural resources, or invest in resilient energy infrastructure strategies. This bill will lead to a greater diversity of opportunities for a diversity of Maine businesses to help them grow and succeed across political spectrums and administrations. In turn, an elevated energy office will help create an environment conducive to the State's goal of 30000 clean energy and efficiency jobs by 2030. These jobs will include engineers, installers, fishermen, foresters, service and utility workers, and small and large business owners and their employees. Engaging small businesses and startups especially will help them grow their businesses and workforce, contribute to climate and energy solutions, and market their products and services to the World.

A cabinet-level energy office will also better convene municipalities, businesses, state officials, and other relevant experts and stakeholders to facilitate discussions of economic and workforce development needs and policy in the cleantech, clean energy, and energy efficiency sectors in regions around the State. The energy office is often focused on conflicts that arise at the intersection of climate, clean energy, and the economy. These include large, costly, controversial, but arguably necessary projects and goals in Maine to achieve the State's renewable energy and climate targets.

A nimbler and politically-removed office can better focus on the types of clean energy technologies applicable to these projects, and how to identify and access supply chain and partnership opportunities (if available and ready) in the future. Sustained leadership will help ensure short-and-long-term jobs and revenues for local communities while replacing power and heat generated from fossil fuels with renewable energy and electrification.

Energy will continue to be a top priority in future administrations. Offshore wind developers will need to build this nascent industry while accommodating and protecting Maine's heritage lobster, fisheries, and marine services industries. Utilities and energy companies will need to finalize a new transmission line to connect renewable energy projects in Aroostook County to New England's power grid, while working with farming/agricultural interests and other landowners along the route. The State has meaningful goals to increase the number of electric vehicles (~219000) on the road in Maine by 2030 and we will need to expand charging station infrastructure in all regions, evaluate effects on utilities and the grid, and ensure equitable and affordable transition for all people in Maine. More than half of Maine's households use fuel oil as their primary energy source for home heating, a larger share than any other state, and hundreds of companies deliver heating oil, propane, biofuels and motor fuels to more than 400000 Maine households to keep them warm. We will need to transition Maine's fossil-fuel workforce to a clean energy economy to ensure that jobs are transformed and not lost to the future. The list of critical energy issues will continue to expand and we will need strong leadership to strengthen Maine's businesses and support a more resilient economy, helping to create and keep good jobs in the state and make Maine a vibrant participant in the low-carbon future.

Maine needs a robust, permanent energy department to help the State set policy and programs to capture the massive capital, investment, and planning needs and new investment resources available across all its economic sectors.