

April 8, 2025

Testimony of Thomas L. Welch in support of LD 1270 – An Act to Establish the
Department of Energy Resources

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology, my name is Thomas Welch, and I live in Hancock, Maine. I served as chairman of the Maine Public Utilities Commission from 1993 to 2005 and again from 2011 through 2014. While I have worked on a variety of energy matters in Maine and elsewhere since my retirement from the PUC, I am writing today solely in my private capacity and not on behalf of any other person or entity, and the views stated here should not be attributed to any other person or entity.

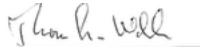
I am writing in support of the provisions relating to the creation of a cabinet level energy department contained in LD 1270 – An Act to Establish the Department of Energy Resources, in particular proposed sections 10301 through 10312 of Part 9, Chapter 103. I offer no opinion on proposed section 10313 (relating to procurement).

The production, distribution, and consumption of energy in its various forms will have increasing importance in Maine in the coming years as Maine seeks an appropriate balance among its economic, environmental, and equity objectives. Moreover, as achieving those objectives will require managing the extraordinarily complex transition away from fossil fuels as the predominant form of energy production, it makes sense to me that the executive branch of Maine's government should have substantial resources dedicated to gathering, evaluating, and making proposals based on energy-related data from Maine and elsewhere.

The creation of a cabinet level department of energy will not, in my view, in any way diminish the vital roles in energy policy and implementation now performed by the Public Utilities Commission and the Legislature (and in particular this committee). The Public Utilities Commission will continue to have a crucial role in implementing the policies established by the Legislature with respect to Maine's electric and natural gas utilities, and the Legislature will continue its difficult work of developing, evaluating, and choosing among laws relating to energy that will best serve the people of Maine. Neither the Commission nor the Legislature, however, have both the scope (in the case of the Commission) or the resources (in the case of the Legislature) to undertake the intensive and comprehensive data collection and evaluation outlined in proposed sections 10301 through 10312 of the bill under consideration here. Indeed, the kind of information that the department would be directed to collect and evaluate under the bill is precisely the kind of information needed for the executive branch to propose, the Legislature to evaluate, and the Commission to implement sound energy policy in Maine.

The Governor's Energy Office as presently constituted, while performing many of the functions described in the bill, does so on an *ad hoc* basis and is often resource-challenged. Creating an adequately funded and staffed cabinet level department would be an appropriate recognition of the increasing importance and complexity of the energy issues facing Maine and the region. I believe it would be in the interests of the state and its citizens for this Committee, and the Legislature, to pass legislation to create a Department of Energy Resources.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Thomas L. Welch".

Thomas L. Welch