

Testimony of Elizabeth Woolfolk in Support of
LD 1270: An Act to Establish the Department of Energy Resources

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and honorable members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee. I am Elizabeth Woolfolk, Manager of Renewable Energy Planning and Policy at A Climate to Thrive. A Climate to Thrive is a community-driven non-profit that is working on a clean energy transition that prioritizes community benefits across Maine, with a particular focus on energy equity. Thank you for providing me with this opportunity to support **LD 1270: An Act to Establish the Department of Energy Resources**.

This bill seeks to create a cabinet level office that will advise the State Legislature, Efficiency Maine Trust, and the Executive branch on how Mainers can have an affordable, reliable, and resilient energy supply. Maine needs an office at this level to effectively organize a unified and strategic approach for our state's clean energy transition. This office would centralize coordination, which in turn will ensure that policies are consistent and aligned with broader state goals. This office will oversee key energy-related services that Mainers depend on, such as LIHEAP, as well as the institution and growth of new programs such as the proposed Distributed Solar and Energy Storage Program and the Maine Energy Resources Development Program. Most importantly, this office will create a platform that will accelerate the growth of renewable energy in Maine in a manner that is strategically aligned with local priorities while seeking to reduce fossil fuel use in our grid.

Developing a cabinet level office to strategically advise the State Legislature, Efficiency Maine Trust and the Executive Branch creates an opportunity for Maine's energy transition to be holistic, by embracing the roles that community, economy, and government need to play in a smooth, successful transition that realizes intersecting benefits such as increased grid resilience, reliability, and affordability. ACTT is particularly enthusiastic about the proposed Distributed Solar and Energy Storage Program, which we see as a critical pathway for community-driven projects to take form; the type of projects that maximally benefit local communities and ratepayers. ACTT has worked to empower community organizations and municipal governments on Mount Desert Island to realize their goals of attaining solar energy, as well as understanding what options are available for energy storage so they may provide assistance to taxpayers in black-sky conditions. We know that these ambitions exist around Maine because they make economic sense, but we also know that implementation of these visions is challenging due to the financial resources and technical assistance required. This program will ensure that our towns can truly explore the resources available to them, and be critical actors in our energy transition.

As proposed, this office will accelerate opportunities that will create jobs while also helping Mainers to be active participants in their transition off of fossil fuels. The creation of the Maine

Energy Resources Development Program will accelerate much-needed research into the renewable energy resources that can be capitalized on in Maine while creating jobs in research and development and in the construction of renewable energy installations that will power our grid.

Finally, on top of enhancing the capacities of community organizations, local governments, and Maine businesses, this office will make strides towards reducing Maine's carbon footprint in a manner that is truly beneficial to all Maine residents. By monitoring petroleum inventories in the State, the Department will help residents access petroleum reserves that can power fuel-powered generators in emergency situations while still working to ensure that, as a State, we are able to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and meet the Department's target of reducing oil use by 50% from the 2007 levels. The proposed Department of Energy Resources will help hold our state government accountable, not only to the goals set in *Maine Won't Wait*, but also to policy passed by the Governor's Office and the Legislature pursuing carbon neutrality and an eighty percent reduction in emissions by 2050. It is through clean energy that our State will make these strides.

This office would provide Maine with the structure and coordination needed to navigate the complexities of the energy transition, ensuring a future that is both sustainable and beneficial for all residents. This office would have the power to set the tempo for our energy transition, and ensure that Mainers have a strong voice in it. For these reasons, ACTT urges this honorable committee to support the passage of **LD 1270: An Act to Establish the Department of Energy Resources**.