

Joe Blotnick
Bernard
LD 1321

Testimony of Joe Blotnick in OPPOSITION of ...

LD 1321: An Act to Reform Net Energy Billing by Establishing Limitations on the Programs' Duration and Compensation

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and honorable members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee.

I am Joe Blotnick, RESIDENT of BERNARD, ME and former Coordinator of A Climate to Thrive which doubled solar energy on MDI through a Solarize Program in 2017. Thank you for the work that you do for the state of Maine and for providing me with this opportunity to oppose LD 1321.

CURRENT NEB WORKS - In 2017 I made a decision to invest in an 8.4 KW rooftop solar energy array. My decision to go solar was based on my strong science-backed belief in climate change and concern for my grandchild's generation's future and to support local jobs in Maine's growing solar industry.

NEB was a big part of my financial decision and of helping me pay off my solar system. Last year, my electric bill was next to nothing since the energy I provided to the grid to Versant covered our electricity, hot water, heat (thanks to heat pumps) and 8,000 miles on our electric car. These savings are what helped my wife and I to retire in dignity. As part of a non-profit, A Climate to Thrive, I also helped my town of Tremont and the MDI High School go 100% solar electricity. This is saving hundreds of thousands of dollars for the town and school district over the life of the panels - all thanks to Net Energy Billing!

NEB SUPPORTS SOLAR JOB GROWTH - According to a report by the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the state's total electricity generation from solar energy was 10 times greater in 2023 than in 2020. Customer-sited, small-scale solar generation like mine and MDI High School increased by 50% between 2022 to 2023 primarily due to incentives including NEB offered by the state. In 2023, more than half, 55% of Maine's solar energy came from small-scale installations that depend on NEB.

WHY pass a bill that would inhibit this extraordinary growth that provides high paying jobs and savings in every one of your districts, not just where a few centralized, out of state fossil fuel plants are located?

In the words of our President, we have an "energy emergency" and whether that is true or not, in reality we have a climate emergency. So let's do everything we can to generate clean, responsible Maine based solar power - and wind - the cheapest type of electrical energy available today.

EVERY HOME, BUSINESS, TOWN WHO GOES SOLAR LOSES UNDER LD 1321. It would change the definition of NEB so that credits only offset supply charges, not transmission and distribution charges. This would reduce the value of NEB credits by 50% for me, the MDI High School, the town of Tremont and tens of thousands of homeowners, business, non-profits and government customers who signed legal contracts spelling out the relationship with the utility.

The savings that I and tens of thousands of Mainers receive from selling green electricity to Versant goes right back into the Maine economy and the money and tax dollars the schools are saving goes into better education for our kids.

Are you more concerned with the profits of our Canadian owners, or in shifting the balance to dirty energy out-of-state sources, than supporting our own home-grown Maine economy?

It is appalling that the state would allow utilities to break legal contracts with customers who have invested dearly in solar, based on NEB.

It is equally appalling that Maine would go against the direction of our own Climate

Council and your own committee's annual report on the NEB program's cost and the benefits of distributed generation showed that, in NEB provided nearly \$30 million more in benefits than costs in 2023.

Finally, The bill would also reduce future project sizes to under 20 kW after November 2025 and limit projects to no more than 10 customers. These changes would virtually eliminate future municipal, small business, and cooperative solar projects. Why would you want that?

I urge you to OPPOSE this bill and instead fund proposals to provide more incentives for low income residents to go solar and help all of our schools go solar.