

Testimony of Carl Wilcox, P.E., For

**LD 1535 An Act to Reduce Illegal Cannabis Operations by Requiring Permits for
High Electrical Usage**

April 24, 2025

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology.

My name is Carl Wilcox, I'm a resident of Minot.. I am a Maine licensed professional environmental engineer, with over 35 years of experience.

I am For LD 1535 and I'm for tax compliance.

First, as a registered Democrat I'm very disappointed that not a single Democrat legislator co-sponsored this bill.

In 2019 I had a 5 kW solar power system installed on my barn. I needed to consent to and submit the following documentation to Central Maine Power.

1. Sign an interconnection agreement which among other requirements allowed CMP to access the property to inspect the system.
2. Pay CMP a \$100 interconnection fee.
3. Sign a net billing agreement.
4. Submit a certificate of completion signed by either a government inspector or by a Maine licensed electrician.

5. And, I had to pay a \$25 building permit fee to the town.

In comparison to the documentation and permitting requirements for a small 5 kVA solar system, this bill that requires documentation of 72 kVA and larger residential services is reasonable and not overly burdensome.

If I stopped to give a ride to a person who was running out of a bank who had a mask over their face, a gun in one hand, and a money bag in the other with some cash falling out, would I be prosecuted for being an accessory to bank robbery?

Other than marijuana grow operations, there are very few reasons why a residential home could use thousands of dollars of electricity per month. Central Maine Power for its financial benefit is colluding with illegal grow operations by not reporting high residential power use.

Illegal grow operations are reducing their tax burden by not being licensed. Those avoided taxes are transferred to legal Maine businesses and residents.

I have read in the media that illegal residential grow operations have \$6,000 or \$10,000 a month electricity bills. I have about a \$50 electric bill in summer (~210 kWhr/month). So, each of these illegal residential grow operations use an equivalent electricity as 120 to 200 residences.

It is my understanding from discussions with my real estate agent and what I have read in the local press, that as of 2024 about 270 rural residential homes have been identified as having been converted to illegal marijuana grow operations. That certainly is not helping to alleviate Maine's housing shortage.

Besides the increase in revenue from the high electric use grow operations, CMP benefits from the distribution system investments that are needed for the grow operations with those costs passed on with a profit multiplier to rate payers. If a cluster of grow operations are located in a rural town or neighborhood, that is sufficient power consumption to possibly require substation upgrades or 3-phase power installation. In my former hometown, New Gloucester, CMP extended 3-phase power for about 1.5 miles for no other apparent reason than to serve a licensed grow operation.

If the illegal grow operations are discovered, they are either going to close or become tax paying legal operations. And, maybe they will relocate to areas where the existing power distribution system is adequate to serve their needs and not add to the infrastructure burden that electric rate payers must bare.

Sincerely,

Carl Wilcox

Minot