



Maine Labor Climate Council

Testimony in Support of LD 1619

“Resolve, to Establish a Commission to Study Pathways for Creating a Thermal Energy Networks Program in Maine”

Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities & Technology

Thursday, April 24, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee. My name is Francis Eanes, and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Labor Climate Council (MLCC). MLCC is a coalition of labor unions across the state committed to ensuring that Maine’s clean energy transition delivers good jobs, strong communities, and a sustainable future for all working people.

I’m here today to offer our **strong support for LD 1619**, which would establish a Commission to study how Maine can implement **Thermal Energy Networks**, or TENs—a highly efficient and equitable form of neighborhood-scale clean heating and cooling.

This bill is about opportunity. It’s about creating a roadmap for delivering lower energy costs, climate solutions that work in Maine’s tough winters, and infrastructure that can be locally built to serve our communities for generations.

Thermal energy networks operate by circulating water through an underground loop that connects multiple buildings—homes, municipal buildings, businesses—and transfers heat to and from sources like the earth, wastewater systems, or bodies of water. In colder states like ours, where the ground remains at a stable 55 degrees year-round, these systems offer incredibly reliable performance, even on the coldest days of the year.

Why does this matter to Maine’s workers and unions? Because TENs don’t just reduce emissions—they represent a concrete pathway to high-road, family-sustaining careers. The skills needed to install and maintain thermal networks overlap significantly with those already used by our gas utility workers, pipefitters, and building trades professionals. This is not theoretical. Across the country—from New York to Massachusetts—labor is leading the way in building TENs, and we have the chance to do the same right here in Maine.

TENs also provide meaningful relief for working families struggling with high utility bills. Residents connected to thermal energy networks can see their heating costs drop by up to a third compared to heating oil. That’s money staying in the pockets of Mainers and easing the burdensome cost of energy.

This bill is a **first, necessary step**. LD 1619 will convene a commission made up of stakeholders to study how best to move forward with a Thermal Energy Networks program in Maine. It's a smart, measured, and collaborative approach—and exactly the kind of process Maine needs to ensure our clean energy future is built **by** and **for** working people.

The Labor Climate Council urges this committee to vote **Ought to Pass** on LD 1619 with Rep. Runte's proposed amendment. Maine has a chance to lead, and more importantly, to lead in a way that brings workers along—not leaves them behind. Let's take that first step together.

Thank you for your time, and please be in touch if there are any questions I may answer for the committee.

Respectfully,
Francis Eanes
Director, Maine Labor Climate Council