

April 24, 2025

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Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

RE: LD 1619—Resolve, to Establish a Commission to Study Pathways for Creating a Thermal Energy Networks Program in Maine

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology, my name is Karen Blakelock and I work as the climate and energy policy advisor for the Nature Conservancy in Maine. I appreciate this opportunity to comment in **support of LD 1619**.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that both nature and people can thrive. We work in more than 70 countries, and use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners.

TNC supports LD 1619 as it creates a commission to explore the costs and benefits of thermal energy networks across the country and assess the feasibility of such technology in Maine. At TNC, we frame our climate and energy work in the scope of the "three C's" – Climate, Conservation, and Community. LD 1619 aligns well with this philosophy, as it directs the commission to study:

Climate: "the suitability of thermal energy network technology for helping to meet the State's statutory emissions reduction goals"

Conservation: Permitting and right-of-way considerations, as well as geophysical considerations.

Additionally, thermal energy networks are generally sited in existing urban landscapes and therefore involve minimal land use impacts beyond what is already developed, an aspect of this technology that The Nature Conservancy strongly supports.

Community: and finally, the proposed legislation directs the commission to consider workforce needs and job training programs to help create a "skilled and ready workforce" as well as the role thermal energy networks can play in increasing the affordability of housing, development and energy.

The Nature Conservancy in Maine is excited that this committee is considering legislation to support neighborhood-scale climate solutions that offer a well-rounded and well-thought-out approach to decarbonization. I ask that you **vote Ought to Pass on LD 1619**. I am happy to answer any questions now or in the future.