Maine Conservation Voters

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Testimony in Support of LD 1473, An Act to Require Utilities to Monitor for Natural Gas Leaks

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, my name is Lucy Hochschartner, and I am the Climate and Clean Energy Director with Maine Conservation Voters (MCV). MCV represents over 14,000 members and supporters who are building a just, thriving future for all by acting on the climate crisis, protecting the environment, and safeguarding our democracy. I would like to offer the following testimony in support of LD 1473, An Act to Require Utilities to Monitor for Natural Gas Leaks.

Natural gas is a small, but growing part of Maine's energy system, and it must be taken seriously.[1] While we often talk about natural gas in the context of its contribution to our electricity supply in New England, natural gas is also used to heat homes and power gas stoves across Maine. The system is all connected by a large system of underground pipes. This system, like all natural gas systems, leaks.

These leaks have profound climate impacts. Methane is the main component of natural gas and a more powerful greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.[2] As Maine looks to protect communities from the worst impacts of climate change and meet our statutory climate goals, we must do everything possible to prevent leaks. While estimates vary, experts are in agreement that natural gas leaks are a significant source of emissions and almost always undercounted.[3]

Leaks are also a serious public health problem. Methane is a precursor to tropospheric ozone, a harmful air pollutant linked to conditions like asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary

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[1] https://assets.canarymedia.com/content/uploads/enn/2024-03-Nat-Gas-Expansion-Chart_2024-02-20-1.pdf; https://hazmat.dot.gov/data-and-statistics/pipeline/gas-distribution-gas-gathering-gas-transmission-hazardous-liquids.

[2] https://climate.mit.edu/ask-mit/how-much-does-natural-gas-contribute-climate-change-through-co2-emissions-when-fuel-burned

[3] https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.0c00437; https://agupubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1029/2019GL082635

disease (COPD).[4] Leaks also release other toxic compounds like benzene and volatile organic carbons (VOCs).[5] No one deserves to have their health or climate compromised by their energy system, and the committee is right to consider solutions.

Sincerely,
Lucy Hochschartner

[4] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1462901122001204#bib29
[5] https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20240621-the-health-effects-of-living-near-a-fossil-fuel-gas-leak